



## Open Call Global Research Program “Funding Canadian Research for Global Impact”

### Program & Application Guidelines

Letter of Intent Deadline: **October 13, 2010**

Full Application Deadline: **April 29, 2011**

Funding period: **Oct 1, 2011 to March 31, 2015**

#### 1.0 Overview

The Stem Cell Network (SCN) ([www.stemcellnetwork.ca](http://www.stemcellnetwork.ca)) is one of Canada's Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) ([www.nce.gc.ca](http://www.nce.gc.ca)) and its mission is to act as a catalyst for enabling translation of stem cell research into clinical applications, commercial products or public policy for Canadians. Now in its final cycle of NCE funding, the Network is conducting an **Open Call** for its **Global Research Program with a total SCN commitment of \$10.5 million**. Successful proposals will be guaranteed the first six months of project funding starting October 1, 2011, with the balance contingent on the SCN securing its final NCE grant for the period April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2015. As such, successful projects will form an integral part of the SCN's revised strategic plan that will be submitted to the NCE Program in Fall 2011.

The SCN expects to fund 3-4 Global Research Projects from October 1, 2011 to March 31, 2015 in **a total amount of up to \$3 million per project**. SCN will accept proposals from any team of investigators eligible to receive CIHR, NSERC or SSHRC funding. All core projects currently supported by the Network are eligible to enter this competition to receive continued funding, but will compete on an equal basis with new proposals. Please note that the Letter of Intent (LOI) process will identify proposals for the full application process. In addition, to facilitate the establishment of strong working teams, SCN will provide, where necessary and justified, financial support in the amount of max. 25,000\$ to facilitate pre-LOI workshops between investigators and with potential partners.

In this open call, the SCN expects to fund research proposals that demonstrate potential for major global impact - to be “a beacon for Canada” in the global stem cell community - and that identify tangible deliverables readily translatable to human health. Proposals should be aligned with at least one of SCN's existing areas of strategic interest (see details below) and need to build on internationally recognized Canadian expertise and strengths in the stem cell field. The SCN also expects these projects to be the foundation of new major Canadian and/or international initiatives in the stem cell field, and therefore the project will need to present a credible strategy to secure public or private funding beyond the life of the Network to achieve its long-term goals.

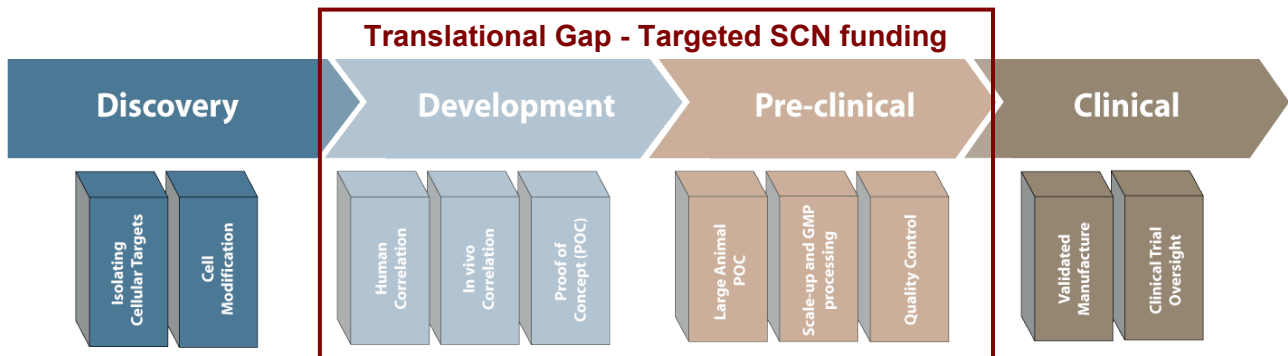
SCN seeks to build on the strong spirit of multidisciplinary collaboration that has been evident in its research program to date. Projects will need to clearly demonstrate a team-based approach to solving the research problem. While project team does not need to be large, it must be multidisciplinary and multi-institutional, drawing on those researchers from across Canada most capable of contributing to the project's aims. Project should also include international collaborators, wherever their inclusion will accelerate project progress (although no SCN funding can flow outside of Canada), as well as relevant partners contributing both time and financial resources. As another manifestation of the Network's broad commitment to collaboration, project teams need to commit to data sharing with Network members and the International community.

SCN seeks to build on its strong project management framework. To this end, projects will need to identify a list of detailed milestones that are necessary in achieving deliverables and that are feasible within the project time frame. Finally, project teams need to demonstrate the ability to manage and successfully complete large projects.

## 2.0 SCN Areas of Strategic Interest

### 2.1 Strategic Area I: Cellular Therapeutics

The SCN wishes to promote the development of novel cellular approaches for tissue repair and regeneration within a specific disease model. Project teams should include basic scientists, bioengineers, and clinicians. Meaningful partnerships with health charities and/or industry are also a requirement. SCN funds will be targeted at the development and pre-clinical stages of research (see figure below).



### 2.2 Strategic Area II: Pharmacological Applications

The SCN also has an interest in the development of novel stem cell related therapeutics, for example ones based on stem cell activation, self-renewal and/or differentiation. Given the nature of biologics development, clear and credible plans to engage industry will be an essential element of the proposal. It is anticipated that this program will be directed towards the identification and validation of candidate biologics within the 3.5-year term of the project. Please note that projects principally focused on drug discovery via high throughput screenings should apply for SCN funding via SCN's Stem Cell Drug Discovery Program.

### 2.3 Strategic Area III: Technology Development

The SCN also wishes to support projects focused on generating novel technologies that will enable stem cell research or the development of stem cell-based therapeutics. It is anticipated that such projects, whether integrated in a larger initiative addressing Strategic Area I or II or submitted "standalone", will identify specific stem cell related products or services for the clinic or the research lab within the 3.5-year term of the project. To that end, industry support is an essential component of proposals in this research area.

Please note: The SCN is conducting a separate competition for research projects focused on Public Policy & Ethical, Legal & Social Issues (ELSI) (see details at [www.stemcellnetwork.ca](http://www.stemcellnetwork.ca)). Nevertheless, an ELSI component may be included in a global research project as long as it is an integral part of the overall research plan.

## 3.0 Eligibility Criteria

- To submit a Letter of Intent (LOI), Project Investigators (Principal Investigators requesting SCN funding) must be eligible to receive grant funding from CIHR, NSERC or SSHRC. Project Collaborators (those not requesting SCN fund) do not need to be eligible for CIHR, NSERC or SSHRC funding. Any person can participate in more than one LOI.

- **To submit a full proposal, applicants must have been successful at the LOI process.** Any person can participate in more than one full proposal. The Network's Research Management Committee anticipates inviting no more than 6-8 groups to submit full proposals.
- In order to receive funds, successful Project Investigators must execute a Standard NCE Network Agreement, through which they will become members of the Stem Cell Network, and take on all of the associated rights and obligations.

## 4.0 Application Process & Evaluation Criteria

### 4.1 Letters of Intent (LOI)

#### 4.1.1 LOI Application process:

To obtain an LOI application form, contact Sophie Chargé at [scharge@stemcellnetwork.ca](mailto:scharge@stemcellnetwork.ca). Completed LOI must be sent **electronically by midnight (senders' time) October 13, 2010** to [scharge@stemcellnetwork.ca](mailto:scharge@stemcellnetwork.ca) – NO SIGNATURES REQUIRED. LOI will be reviewed by SCN's International Scientific Advisory Board and the SCN's Research Management Committee. All LOI applicants will receive feedback from the Network by early January 2011 and successful applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal. Project Leaders of successful LOI will meet by teleconference with the Network office in January 2011 to review the requirements for the full proposals, and to have specific questions answered.

#### 4.1.2 LOI Application form:

The LOI consists of four sections as outlined below. Application forms must be obtained by contacting Sophie Chargé at [scharge@stemcellnetwork.ca](mailto:scharge@stemcellnetwork.ca) and should be completed using **single space, font Arial (minimum size 11) and 1 inch margins**.

<b>1 – Project Overview</b>	<p><b>Project Title (max. 15 words)</b> - capture the essence of what is to be done/found.</p> <p><b>Project Leader</b> - Identify <b>one</b> Project Investigator who will be responsible for managing the project, including allocation of project budgets, and progress reporting to the Network.</p> <p><b>Global Impact</b> - In one sentence, identify what <b>major impacts</b> your proposed research will have on the international stem cell community.</p> <p><b>Key Deliverables</b> - Identify three <b>key project deliverables</b> (use bullet form and one sentence for each deliverable).</p> <p><b>Executive Summary</b> - Provide a summary (400 words max.) in <b>lay terms</b> of the proposal highlighting project objectives and deliverables, and describing how the research is readily translatable to human health, and relating how the goals of the proposal will benefit Canadians in the long term. Identify key team members and partners. Describe the relevance of the proposed research to at least one of the three SCN Areas of Strategic Interest outlined above, and to this competition.</p> <p><b>Budget</b> – Provide an estimate of the total budget required. Please note that SCN will not allocate more than <b>\$3 million to any given project</b>.</p>
<b>2 – Project Team</b>	<p><b>Team members</b> – List all proposed project investigators and project collaborators (e.g., project investigators are PI (principal investigators) who are requesting SCN funding, project collaborators are PI that are active participants in the project who are not requesting SCN funding). Provide their name, position, organizational affiliations and email addresses. Do not include trainees and personnel. Provide a 2-3 lines description of the role of each team member in the proposed research, clearly identifying the expertise and strengths your proposed research team encompasses and how these will benefit the proposed research. Provide a Canadian Common CV (<a href="http://www.commoncv.net">www.commoncv.net</a>) in the <b>NCE format</b> for no more than 5 project investigators (including the Project Leader) and append a list of selected publications for each.</p>
<b>3 – Research Proposal</b> (max. four pages, excluding references)	<p>Describe the background and rationale, and objectives for the project, including any relevant preliminary findings highlighting those from previously funded Network projects, and briefly outline the proposed work to be undertaken. Identify and describe the key milestones and deliverables of the project over the period October 1, 2011 to March 31, 2015. Clearly articulate why this approach and this team is internationally competitive.</p>

**4 – Partnerships** List each of the **potential** Partners for the project and a one sentence description of each Partners' role and anticipated financial/in-kind contribution. Letters of support from Partners are **not** required until full application process.

**Long-term Sustainability** - The SCN will sunset in 2015 and no further funding will be available from the SCN to support the project's long-term goals. Please briefly describe (400 words max.) your plans to secure long-term funding prior to completion of the project, including a realistic assessment of the conditions for increased industry partner funding, provincial and/or federal funding. Also consider whether the project would likely be the basis to establish an international consortium or for Canada to join/enhance its presence in an existing consortium, and whether this might open new sources of international funding.

#### 4.1.2 LOI Evaluation criteria:

- 1) Alignment with Open Call and SCN's Areas of Strategic Interest:** The proposed research is aligned with this open call and at least one of the three areas of strategic interest summarized in section 2.
- 2) Research Excellence:** The proposed research is creative/innovative and seeks results/information/output of major global impact as judged on an international level and is feasible to complete by March 2015. The proposed research builds on internationally recognized Canadian expertise and strengths in the stem cell field. The proposed team is capable of undertaking the research plan.
- 3) Networking:** The project relies for its success on the aggregation, integration or comparison of the results of multiple investigators, and the project team includes relevant disciplines, collaborators and receptors.
- 4) Project Management:** The project has a well-thought out and clear plan to attack a specific research problem, in an integrated fashion, with clear deliverables and milestones. The project leader has demonstrated the ability to manage and successfully complete large projects.
- 5) Partnering & Long-term Sustainability:** The proposal has identified partners or there is a clear and viable plan to secure specific partners for the full proposal. There is a clear and viable plan to ensure long-term sustainability of the project.

#### 4.2 Full Proposal

##### 4.2.1 Application process:

Full application forms will be distributed to successful LOI applicants in January 2011. Completed full application must be sent **electronically by midnight (senders' time) April 29, 2011** to [scharge@stemcellnetwork.ca](mailto:scharge@stemcellnetwork.ca) – NO SIGNATURES REQUIRED. Full proposals will be reviewed by the SCN's International Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB). The ISAB will make their final recommendations and rankings to the SCN's Research Management Committee (RMC). The RMC will provide their recommendations to the SCN's Board of Directors along with the ISAB reports. The Board of Directors will make the final decision as to which projects should be funded and the budgets to be awarded. The Network expects to announce awards by July, 2011 and funding of projects will start October 1, 2011. Funding for the period April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2015 will be contingent on SCN being successful at obtaining its final NCE grant for that period.

##### 4.2.2 Application form:

The full proposal consists of 8 sections as outlined below. Application forms for full proposals will be distributed to project leaders who are successful in the LOI process.

1 – Project Overview	Same requirements as LOI (Excluding Budget)
2 – Project Team	Same requirements as LOI but requesting CV for all project Investigators.
<b>3 – Research Proposal</b> (max. 15 pages, including table & figures but excluding references)	(a) Describe the background, rationale, and objectives of the project including any relevant preliminary findings highlighting those from previously funded Network projects. (b) Outline the proposed research methods and approach, clearly demonstrating the integration of project members' expertise towards achieving the goals of the project. (c) Detail the anticipated key milestones for <b>each of the funded years</b> and the key deliverables anticipated by the end of the funding period, highlighting how they will have a commercial or clinical impact. (d) Highlight the international competitiveness of the project articulating clearly why this approach and this team are internationally competitive. (e) References. Note: Projects may include research on Ethical, Legal and/or Social Issues related to their project, but are not required to do so.
4 – Partnerships	(a) List each potential partner that will participate in the project, the specific nature of the contribution, and the cash and/or in-kind contributions anticipated from the partner(s) to the project. It is expected that each project will seek to match at least 50% of the requested SCN funding at the outset, and will continue to seek additional partner funding if selected. Please note that the three federal granting councils (CIHR, NSERC and SSHRC), Genome Canada, CFI and any other NCE are not “eligible” partners for the purposes of this match.  (b) <b>Provide a signed letter of support</b> on the letterhead of each “eligible” partner detailing the extent of their collaboration and/or their cash and in-kind contribution towards the particular project. The letter should specifically include reference to the Stem Cell Network, the proposed project, and any conditions placed on funding.  <b>Please note funding of projects without letters of support from “eligible” partners at the time of application will be given a lower priority than those which do.</b>  (c) Conflict of Interest declaration: Where a project Investigator has a “financial interest” (as defined by NCE Conflict of Interest Guidelines) in a partner the potential conflict of interest should be declared. This does not preclude the partnership in any way, but provides transparency to the review process. <b>Please see SCN Conflict of Interest Framework available on the SCN website for further information.</b>
5 – Long-term Sustainability (max. 1 page)	The SCN will sunset in 2015 and no further funding will be available from the SCN to support the project's long-term goals. Please describe your plans to secure long-term funding prior to completion of the project, including a realistic assessment of the conditions for increased industry partner funding, provincial and/or federal funding. Also consider whether the project would likely be the basis to establish an international consortium or for Canada to join/enhance its presence in an existing consortium, and whether this might open new sources of international funding.
6 – Knowledge Translation & Technology Transfer (max 2 pages)	Describe the specific strategies that will be employed, beyond publications, to translate the projects research outcomes into long-term outcomes that will benefit Canadians.  For example: for cellular therapies, indicate the nature of the disease, the number of Canadians affected, and how the outcomes of the project could be of benefit to them. Then describe where the project is situated in the product development process, how the outcomes of the project will be used in the next phase, and (at a high level) the likely timeframes and next steps for moving therapies through to clinical trials. Describe the role of existing project partners in realizing these long-term goals, and the likely future partners that will be needed in due course. Describe potential intellectual property that may arise, and any plans for protecting that IP.
7 – Budget	Please complete the EXCEL budget template (provided with the application form) and provide <b>justification/comments to the budget</b> . Note that SCN eligible expenses are identical to those of CIHR. <b>Projects that propose budgets that vary significantly from the guidelines (\$3 million over 3.5 years) will be triaged immediately by the Network office, and will not be reviewed further.</b>  Include in the budget personnel (undergrad, grad, post-docs, research associate, research assistant) that will be hired for the project with SCN funding and include expenses related to personnel inter-laboratory exchanges and workshops. Note: The SCN is unable to support the direct patients costs associated with any clinical trial.
8 – Project	Schematic of project plan: Provide a workflow diagram that illustrates (a) the key steps, milestones and

<b>Management &amp; Networking</b> (max. 2 pages)	<p>deliverables described in the research plan and (b) the Investigators involved in each step.</p> <p>A project of this scale will require a dedicated project manager. Separate funding for project management will be available outside of the project budget, and will be negotiated post-award with the Network office. Describe how you envisage using a project manager to accomplish the project goals. If you already have a particular individual in mind, provide his/her name and describe why he/she would be competent at fulfilling the role of a project manager/administrator for your team. Include the individual's CV with your proposal submission.</p> <p>In addition, describe the specific actions and tools/methods that will be used to facilitate networking in the project and with other projects (e.g. workshops, lab exchanges, web-based communications). Note that once approved, project teams will have access to encumbered funds to organize team meetings and workshops on a regular basis. Therefore there is no need to identify these costs within the proposed budget.</p>
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#### 4.2.3 Evaluation criteria:

It is important to note that the criteria are not the same as those of a traditional granting agency, and reflect the different mandate and objectives of a Network of Centres of Excellence.

- 1) **Alignment with RFA and SCN's Areas of Strategic Interest:** Identical to LOI.
- 2) **Research Excellence:** Identical to LOI.
- 3) **Networking:** Identical to LOI.
- 4) **Project Management:** Identical to LOI.
- 5) **Knowledge Exchange & Technology Transfer:** The project has a clear and feasible plan to apply and implement research outcomes.
- 6) **Partnering & Sustainability:** This request for proposals again places an emphasis on partnering and encourages projects to match at least 50% of the requested SCN funding at the outset, and to continue to seek additional partner funding if selected, with a view to ensuring the project can be sustained beyond the life of the Network in order to meet its long-term goals. Partner funding must be cash and/or in-kind contributions by "NCE eligible sources". NCE eligible sources include corporations and not-for profit organizations, and government, but exclude the following Federal funds: Granting Councils (CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC), CFI, other NCEs, Genome Canada. Projects which score highly on the first five criteria will be prioritized in the following order:
  - a) Proposals that have partners in place at the time of submission, and/or have a clear and viable plan to secure specific partners within six months of project award.
  - b) Proposals which do not have partners in place, but which the Network Board (as advised by an international review panel) believe have strong partnering potential, and in which there is a willingness of the project team to work with the Network office to close those partnerships within one year of project award.
  - c) Proposals for which there is little or no prospect of partnerships in the twelve months following project award.

Principal Investigators (PI) should note that the Network Agreement provides that any intellectual property (IP) arising from Network funded projects is handled in exactly the same way as IP arising from CIHR funded projects (i.e., ownership rests with the institution or PI depending on the institution's own policy). Either the Network office or your Technology Transfer Office will be pleased to assist you with any concerns in this regard.

## 5.0 Expectations regarding Project Management and Reporting

The Network follows a strong project management approach that empowers Project Leaders, vesting them with more responsibility and accountability for project management and results. The Network's Research Management Committee (RMC) also has an active role in reviewing project progress and providing advice and feedback to project teams on an ongoing basis. This approach encompasses a number of features as follow:

- Project Leaders are responsible for the allocation of funds within project teams according to ongoing progress and need. It is expected that continued funding for PIs participating in a project will be contingent on reasonable progress towards stated milestones and deliverables.
- Project Leaders will be required to submit project reports to the SCN office and attend regular face-to-face meeting with the Network's RMC.
- Continued funding of SCN projects will be contingent both on fulfilling management and reporting requirements, and substantive progress towards milestones and deliverables. Projects that do not meet these expectations may be terminated before the end of their terms by a recommendation from the RMC to the Network Board, and funds reallocated to other projects or Network activities.

## 6.0 Important Dates

<b>October 13, 2010</b>	<b>Letters of Intent (LOIs) due</b>
Early January, 2011	Feedback on LOIs to Project Leaders distributed
January, 2011	Conference Call for Project Leaders of successful LOIs with Network office to clarify full proposal requirements and to answer questions
<b>April 29, 2011</b>	<b>Full proposals due</b>
July, 2011	Results announced
October 1, 2011	Funding of successful proposals commences

**For further information:** Please contact Sophie Chargé (613-739-6672 [scharge@stemcellnetwork.ca](mailto:scharge@stemcellnetwork.ca)), Drew Lyall (613-739-6674 [dlyall@stemcellnetwork.ca](mailto:dlyall@stemcellnetwork.ca)), or Michael Rudnicki (613-739-6740 [mrudnicki@ohri.ca](mailto:mrudnicki@ohri.ca)).

**Pour des informations en français,** veuillez contacter Sophie Chargé par téléphone au 613-739-6672 ou par courriel à [scharge@stemcellnetwork.ca](mailto:scharge@stemcellnetwork.ca).