

# Nursing Care Partnership

## Executive merit review panel: Terms of reference

### 1. Introduction

#### Partnership Structure

The **Nursing Care Partnership (NCP)** is a research initiative to increase the pool of funds available for research on nursing care issues. In January 2003, the **Canadian Health Services Research Foundation (CHSRF)** granted the **Canadian Nurses Foundation (CNF)** a five-year renewable award of \$2.5 million for the administration of the program. The program received a positive evaluation by CHSRF in December 2004 and will continue at CNF through 2012 as long as evaluations remain positive and funds are available.

Currently, NCP works solely on a partnership structure. The purpose of forming partnerships is to use the NCP fund to leverage existing nursing care research funding and to encourage new supporters of nursing care research. Partners include charities, hospital and research foundations, nursing specialty groups, institutes, health care corporations and other agencies with an interest in supporting nursing care research.

Nursing care researchers receive NCP funding by successfully competing in the partners' competitions. CNF does not run direct competitions. Partner organizations:

- Run their own competitions, including peer/merit review
- Submit successful proposals to CNF for approval through the NCP merit review process and CNF Board, and
- Administer funds to successful candidates.

#### Merit Review Principles

- Research supported with funds from the NCP will have undergone a review by the partner agency that includes positive assessment by nursing and other peers of its scientific merit and capacity of the research team. Reviewers will include scientists who have expertise in bio-ethics, statistics and research methodology.
- Research supported with funds from the NCP will have undergone a review that includes positive assessment by decision-makers of its potential impact on nursing practice and health services delivery (either through the originating agency and/or through the CNF).
- CNF strives to streamline the dual review process as much as possible in the interest of enabling partners to make timely funding decisions. To this end, CNF encourages partners to integrate NCP review criteria into their review processes. The NCP Executive Merit Review Panel (NCP panel) reviews the partner's review panel and process and assesses for gaps. If there are gaps in the partner's process, CNF may review proposals from the perspective of the gap(s).
- The NCP panel provides constructive feedback—from the perspective of meeting NCP criteria—to CNF partners on their review processes with the objective of developing stronger, more collaborative review processes that eliminate the need for dual reviews.
- The NCP panel provides constructive feedback to researchers, through the partner organization, on every proposal submitted, with the objective of developing stronger research projects and proposals.

## **2. Chair and Membership**

The NCP Executive Merit Review Panel (NCP panel) consists of one Chair and at least three members, two (2) of whom are researchers and one (1) of whom holds a decision-making position in the health care field. Membership commitment is for a term of two (2) years, with members' terms staggered to ensure ongoing NCP panel experience and renewal.

## **3. Role of Chair**

The NCP panel Chair is directly responsible to CNF for ensuring that the panel functions smoothly, effectively and objectively. He/she establishes a positive, constructive, fair-minded environment in which the partner applications are to be evaluated.

The Chair facilitates discussion among the reviewers and ensures that all NCP criteria are assessed. The Chair ensures that recorded review comments on all submissions reflect the full range of panel discussion. The Chair also helps to identify external reviewers as needed.

## **4. Meetings**

The NCP panel will meet in Ottawa twice a year and once by teleconference.

Because of the nature of the NCP partnership structure, it may be necessary to hold one (1) or more additional "virtual" meetings, using e-mail and/or teleconferencing technology.

## **5. CNF Policy**

The NCP panel is asked by CNF Board to review applications from partner organizations and make recommendations on the suitability of projects for NCP funding. The CNF Board of Directors has final authority over expenditure of NCP funds. Board decisions are based on NCP Panel ratings, CNF values and strategic objectives, and financial considerations.

## **6. Context**

The NCP program is in its infancy and will evolve over the next several years. The program is evaluated based on indicators agreed upon by CNF and CHSRF and has targeted goals and parameters.

NCP panel members are encouraged to participate in the program's development by offering and discussing their opinions and acting in an advisory role on directions for the future.

In particular, NCP panel members will be asked to advise on and refine the NCP merit review process.

## **7. Confidentiality**

All information contained in applications, internal and external reviews, and panel discussions is strictly confidential. NCP panel members must not discuss with applicants or reviewers any information relating to the review of a specific application, or offer opinions on the chances of success or failure. All requests for information on an application or a reviewer report should be referred to the CNF Executive Director.

## 8. Conflict of Interest<sup>1</sup>

CNF must make every effort to ensure not only that its decisions are fair and objective, but also that they are seen to be so. No NCP panel member with a conflict of interest may participate in the review of an application. As a result:

1. NCP panel members who have an application before the panel will absent themselves from any discussion of the relevant partner organization's submission. The NCP panel member may be asked to absent him/herself from that meeting of the panel.
2. NCP panel members who:
  - are from the same immediate institution or organization as the applicant, and who interact with the applicant in the course of their duties at the institution or organization
  - have collaborated, published or been a co-applicant with the applicant, within the last five years,
  - have been a student or supervisor of the applicant within the last ten years,
  - are a close personal friend or relative of the applicant,
  - have had long-standing scientific or personal differences with the applicant,
  - are in a position to gain or lose financially from the outcome of the application (e.g., hold stock in the company of an industry partner or a competitor) or
  - for any other reason feel that they cannot provide an objective review of the application

must declare a conflict of interest and leave the room when such a proposal is up for review. The Chair is responsible for resolving areas of uncertainty.

The Chair is subject to the same conflict of interest guidelines as regular panel members.

All NCP panel members are asked to sign a form agreeing to abide by the Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest policies when they join the NCP panel. All external reviewers are sent a copy of the policies with the application(s) they are asked to review.

## 9. Types of Applications

Individual proposals have already been rated fundable by the NCP partner organization(s) based (always) on scientific merit and (often) on decision-making relevance.

NCP reviewers are asked to assess:

- partners' review panels and processes to ensure that NCP review criteria have been met.
- individual projects for overall suitability for NCP funding in terms of ensuring that projects have close links to nursing practice and NCP priorities and criteria for funding.

## 10. Summary of Process for Review

The NCP document *Merit review process: Information for reviewers* summarizes the current review process and will be revised on an ongoing basis as the process develops.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from CIHR Peer Review Process