

## **So you want money? NBHRF Webinar #1**

**Peter:** Good morning. My name is Peter Brenders, the relatively new CEO of the New Brunswick Health Research Foundation. I want to welcome you to the first in the NBHRF's knowledge mobilization webinar series.

As you know, with the support of the government of New Brunswick, each year the NBHRF provides millions of dollars in the form of grants and salary awards to New Brunswick health researchers and students. These funds are provided through our programs as well as research partnerships. In today's webinar, we look to highlight these open application programs and walk through some common questions and answers.

Before we get started, let me do a little bit of housekeeping, as we figure out this webinar world.

First, please note this session is being recorded and will be available on the nbhrf.com website in the coming days. All attendees are muted for this webinar but we encourage questions from attendees. There is a Q&A tab on the bottom of your screen. You can type in your questions there. If we are not able to get to your question during this webinar, we will try to answer it in a Q&A document that we will also post on our website later this week.

Let's get started. Joining me today is NBHRF's Director of health research and resident expert on all things funding, Leah Carr. Good morning Leah.

**Leah:** Good morning.

**Peter:** Leah, as we get going here, I was hoping we could spend a few minutes to give an overview of the breadth of support programs the NBHRF offers. I know, through the help of the government we are providing millions of dollars each year to support research in three priority areas. Maybe you can briefly tell us about these.

**Leah:** Sure. We have, as you say, three priority areas at the moment. They are under capacity building, meeting the population health needs of the province, and clinical research.

So under each of these priorities, we have grants and awards offered only from NBHRF, so we call those NBHRF-led, and we also have grants and awards offered under partnerships. I can go through those briefly if you like.

**Peter:** Sure, take us through those.

**Leah:** Under capacity building, for NBHRF-led, most folks are familiar with our bridge grants, our establishment grants, our studentships, which includes the summer, graduates and postdocs, our research workshop support grants, our knowledge translation grants, which used to be known as travel grants. And we also offer matching funding for research chairs.

With our partners, we offer awards and grants in various combinations. Some partners have grants and awards, some just have one or the other. But our partners include AGE-Well, that's an NCE, the Alzheimer's Society, the Beatrice Hunter Cancer Research Institute, Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI), the Canadian Frailty Network, CIHR, obviously. The CIHR partnerships kind of happen by program, there isn't really a CIHR overall partnership per se with CIHR. But we are in close contact with them all the time and so we are aware of what they are offering and what they're not. The Heart and Stroke Foundation of New Brunswick, the Kidney Foundation of Canada, the Multiple Sclerosis Society of

Canada and Prostate Cancer Canada, to name a few (and I will probably get to a few more in a second here).

So that's it for capacity building.

**Peter:** Just on that, before we go further along. So all these partnership, we are listing all those on our website? Because I don't remember them from time to time. So any person can just jump on our website and find out what these are all about?

**Leah:** Yes. And what they will see is the partnership page describing what we are partnering on with that particular entity. So which programs we are partnering on. But then it provides a link to the website of the partner, because all applications go through the partner.

**Peter:** Ok.

**Leah:** So moving on to population health needs. For NBHRF-led projects, we have our strategic initiative grants and what we call the Wellness Fund. Now the Wellness Fund is offered in collaboration with the Department of Social Development and those offerings just come up from time to time depending on their needs and what they've got in the works that they would like to have funded.

And then we also from time to time initiate special projects. That's what we call it. So that kind of encompasses anything that might come up. Most recently of course we had some opportunities to fund projects under the COVID-19 umbrella, so that's an example.

Then again we have all those partners that I listed for grants and awards under this particular priority. In addition, there is the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, Prostate Cancer Canada and the Stan Cassidy Foundation.

Ok if we go on to clinical now?

**Peter:** Yeah, yeah sure. This is great. So anyone who is writing all these notes and trying to figure out all these different programs – just a reminder they are all up on our website and they are easy to find and get access to.

**Leah:** Yes, and when people are viewing all these programs on our website, there is certainly an open-ended invitation to give me a call if they have any questions.

**Peter:** Fair enough.

**Leah:** So we only lead one clinical-related program right now, and those are clinical scholarships. And they are provided for actual clinical researchers. That program we run every four years. Since it's inception, we've run it every four year, but again that could change depending upon availability of funds, obviously.

Then we have partnerships with CIHR for clinical research, and also with the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

**Peter:** But in the previous two categories too, so clinical research could be covered by those as well, if someone was doing clinical research related to the population health needs, so it's not the only clinical research.

**Leah:** Yes, the difference there is the clinical scholarships is an actual salary award for clinicians so that they can devote time to research exclusively.

**Peter:** So that's a lot of programs that are out there. Is there any sort of broad requirements or consistency across these programs, or some way you can tell us they generally differ? For example, do all programs require match funding? Do they require other funding? Is it NBHRF sole-funded? Is there any broad explanation you can give us on that?

**Leah:** As I mentioned, applications all go through our partners for the partnership programs, so requirements can be quite different, obviously, depending on who the partner is and what their priorities are and what they would like to see as part of the applications that are submitted. So those can be quite different, yes.

For NBHRF led things, they are pretty similar, I would say. Like the researcher has to be at a New Brunswick-based institution for example. Some do require matching funds, but not all. The strategic partnerships does require matching funds, actually at a 2:1 ratio with the partner. And our knowledge translation grants also have matching funds as a requirement. But those are the only two.

**Peter:** Thanks Leah. Let's take a moment and get some input from our attendees. We are going to put up a poll question. It's going to appear on your screen in a second. I would like you to take a moment and select which NBHRF program you would most like to know more information today. We put five choices up there, so you select your choice and hit submit. We've just included five:

1. Summer studentships because the deadline is coming up soon
2. Grad Student & Post-Doctoral Fellowships
3. Clinical Scholarships that Leah talked a bit about
4. Bridge Grants
5. Knowledge Transfer Grants

Take a moment to make your selection and then hit submit. We are trying to make this an interactive webinar so that we are up to date on what people's different views are.

Hopefully you've had a chance. Maybe I could ask for the results to pop up. So it looks like the majority would like to know a little bit more about Summer Studentships and then some Grad, and then some Bridge Grants.

OK, so let's talk about Summer Studentships in more detail. I understand the detail for researchers to apply is fast approaching. Leah, can you give us an overview?

**Leah:** So the deadline is February 15. That actually is a change from previous years. We've delayed it a month. The thing about this program that I think should be noted is that it is the supervisor who is the applicant, but we do ask that the student be named upon application time. This allows us to have information about the student in the application, things like their transcript, etc.

**Peter:** So on that, maybe you can tell us about some key considerations when you talk about the student transcript. What else is looked at for the funding decision?

**Leah:** Ok, so before I get into that, the other thing to note is that we do offer amounts for awards of different time periods – 8, 12, or 16 weeks, depending on what the student has available. The rate is the same, but the amount varies based on how many weeks you are doing. So the maximum amount on this is a little over \$6,900.

When we get an application, we look at everything that is provided, obviously, but I would say that the key, there is really three keys. One of them is obviously your GPA. The higher your GPA, the higher your chances. But that is combined with the area of research and the relevance of that research to the province. In addition, whether or not you have any research or research-related experience. So experience in things that would require similar skills to that of a researcher.

**Peter:** When are decisions made and when do we find out?

**Leah:** We commit to communicating results to everyone by March 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Peter:** I have a list of questions I've seen come in in the past related to summer studentships. One of them relates to CCVs. Can you talk a little bit about that?

**Leah:** We ask everybody who applies to us to do a CCV on what is called the NBHRF template. The reason we do that is because that actually goes into the database of all CCVs. And because we participate with the federal government in this facility, we can view all CCVs from New Brunswick-based researchers. So I can log in and I can see everybody's CCV that's been submitted. That is why we want them on the NBHRF template, because those are the only ones that we can see. We like to see them because we can offer people assistance in finding people to collaborate with, finding out what people are up to, so that's the whole idea behind that.

We ask you to provide us with the submitted version of your CCV. If it's not submitted, we can tell because it says draft right on the top of it. So you need to submit. After you submit, there's a number of tabs on the website and you'll see the History tab. When you go under the History tab you'll see the PDF version that needs to be with the application.

**Peter:** Another detailed question about the application itself. So two sections of the form Funding for the Project. What's the difference?

**Leah:** Yes, there are two section, and yes it's a little confusing.

In the first section, which is called Funding Sources, we are asking you to list all of the funds you have, you being the supervisor, from all sources for the research project that the summer student will be involved in. That will include the amount you are asking NBHRF for.

The second section is called Funds Held By Supervisor for Research Project. In that section, you can kind of tell by the fields that are there and the information that we ask for, but we are asking you to list any specific amounts from the other sources you have listed in the first section, that you will be paying to the summer student. Because obviously, they can decide what they are using their funds for. So that's in addition to what you are requesting from NBHRF. So let's say you are asking NBHRF for \$6,900, but you know the nature of the research work you are going to be asking your student to do, so you might be taking \$1,000 of the your NSERC grant for that.

**Peter:** Another admin question I have for you in terms of who signs this application and do you take electronic signatures?

**Leah:** Yes, we take electronic signatures, we started doing that a while ago. For most institution, the Head of the supervisor's Department should sign. First of all, the supervisor signs as the applicant. The Head of the Department or their Dean can sign for Department. And somebody from the Research Office needs to sign on behalf of the institution. For DalMed, we have established individuals who should be signing for them. So Dr. Jennifer Hall is the one who signs for Department Head (she is

actually the Dean) and Nancy Hawger is the financial representative who signs on behalf of the institution for DalMed.

**Peter:** Ok. Maybe we can take a minute to talk about eligibility of certain students. Can you talk to us about international versus domestic students, different programs in the province? Give us a sense of who is eligible.

**Leah:** So yes, we accept applications for international and domestic students. Doesn't matter as long as they are registered at a New Brunswick institution and this is their supervisor who is applying.

We've got a couple of specific programs that are rather new, actually. One of these is a health sciences diploma at UdeM. It's a two-year diploma and students in that program are allowed to apply for summer studentships to us. If they are in their second year, they need to demonstrate that they are applying to another degree program or medical school in the fall.

The guideline applies really to anybody that's in 4<sup>th</sup> year. These are summer studentships for undergrad, but if you are planning to apply to a graduate program in the fall, we do accept applications from students in their 4<sup>th</sup> year. We will ask for documentation on that. Sometimes, you don't have your acceptance from your university. We will take letters from the supervisor attesting to the fact that the student is intending to apply.

**Peter:** What about students who are in another university elsewhere in Canada but are transferring to a New Brunswick university for the remainder of their degree? Could they apply?

**Leah:** Yes, same thing. Obviously it's the supervisor who is going to apply, but they could name a student in that situation. Again, we just ask for documentation to support the fact that they will be enrolled here in the fall.

**Peter:** Does that apply to an international student going to start a program in the fall? They are not here yet, but they are going to start in fall 2021. Can they be funded if they have an acceptance letter?

**Leah:** If they are moving on to a second degree for that, then yes. If you haven't started your undergrad yet, then no.

**Peter:** Ok, so they have to already be in a program. They can't just be about to start.

**Leah:** They can't be about to start an undergrad program.

**Peter:** So lots of detailed questions. Maybe folks could reach out to you. Would that be all right if they reached out to you directly?

**Leah:** Of course!

**Peter:** So just [leah.carr@nbhrf.com](mailto:leah.carr@nbhrf.com).

**Leah:** Yes, sir!

**Peter:** Ok, so those are great insights. I really appreciate that. Question though: What is the typical success rate is for Summer Studentships. Is there some sense of hope here? Or is it like CIHR and good luck!

**Leah:** It's great, it's one of our most successful programs. I'm not going to comment on the CIHR thing, ok!

**Peter:** It is good luck!

**Leah:** Our success rate is actually around 70% for this program, so that's really wonderful. We actually have a little over \$100,000 a year that we give out for summer students.

**Peter:** That sounds great. That will certainly help a lot of students, and a lot of researchers.

Let's move on to some of other programs that are out there. So bridge grants came up as an area where our audience is looking for more information. Maybe you can tell us more about the process.

**Leah:** Bridge grants are for an amount up to \$35,000 for a duration of 12-18 months. The thing about this program that is maybe a little different is that an applicant must have already applied to a national funding agency and received their peer review information back, and not been funded through that agency. If their peer review results are the equivalent of 3.75 out of 5 or above, or 3.5 out of 5 or above and ranking in the top 50% of the competition, then they can use that application as the basis for the application to us. The original decision from the national agency needs to be within the last 15 months of the application to NBHRF.

The idea behind these grants is to help build the capacity and help a researcher do a little bit of a pilot project and have a bit of data so that they can beef up and enhance the application to the national agency the second time around. And we do require that you do apply again after you've had a bridge grant.

**Peter:** So is it automatically awarded then? If you hit those criteria, that score of 3.75, do you automatically get the 35K?

**Leah:** Well, I don't know about automatic, but yes, it kind of is. The only thing that would influence that is the availability of funds at NBHRF.

**Peter:** What about other funding that a researcher may already have? Are you allowed to basically top up?

**Leah:** You are not allowed to have funding for that specific project.

**Peter:** So there is no double dipping allowed.

**Leah:** That's right, yes.

**Peter:** Fair enough. Can we take a second. I guess the other question that folks had was on grad students and postdoctoral awards. Can you give us a quickie overview on that?

**Leah:** It's kind of the same as what I just said for bridge grants. Those programs require previous applications to other agencies as well. The scoring and all that is the same. Again, the only thing really that would influence the award is the availability of funds at NBHRF.

**Peter:** And deadline, there are no deadlines, is that correct?

**Leah:** For bridge grants and establishment grants, there are no deadlines. For the graduate student awards and postdoctoral fellowships, yes there is a deadline and I'm just going to see what it says on the website because I'm thinking of, or planning on, adjusting that deadline so I don't know whether it's posted yet or not, so I'm going to check.

**Peter:** So everyone who is listening in on this and watching on this one can realize that we have a lot of programs and even we look at our own website just to double check to make sure we are giving out the right information from time to time. But I think that's an important piece Leah, that there is structure, and it's not a capricious decision-making process out there. The programs are defined. There is a process. There is an independence behind it to allow for fairness and transparency.

**Leah:** So our website right now says May 1 for our students, but it's going to be delayed to June 15.

**Peter:** There we go – hot news right off the press. Directly from the expert! So June 15.

**Peter:** Any additional points you would like to make about specific programs? Any other 'tips for success' that our programs have that you might want to offer folks?

**Leah:** I'll continue on with something you've mentioned already, which is about double dipping, so to speak. We are funded by taxpayer dollars, so we are obligated to ensure that we are using those funds efficiently and effectively. We expect that all applicants will disclose to us all other sources of funding that they have for their research activities. We can go back to our applicants and talk about it, and find out what those funds are for just to make sure that they are not being used for the same thing.

I don't know if people think, does it increase your likelihood of success if you have funds from others. Yes and no. A definite yes for our workshop support program. Even though it's not a requirement, we do like to see the fact that other people have skin in the game, particularly the one that's hosting the workshop, and that there are plans for doing things like a registration fee, to contribute to the cost of putting on the workshop.

I'll just reiterate that matching funds from other sources are not a requirement in most of our programs, other than strategic initiatives.

**Peter:** You've said something there that I want to come back to. You talk about you might reach out to the applicants to get more clarity. I think that's an important piece to understand. The processes aren't so cold and automated that people can't send you an email or pick up the phone and give you a call and say "Leah, this is what I'm thinking". In my short time at the NBHRF, it does seem that there is a certain flexibility within the organization to help researchers as much as possible. We are biased and interested in building this capacity in the province. So what I'm hearing, and correct me if I'm wrong, is that we do want the researchers to be successful, they just have to fit within the programs. Is that a good assessment of what I'm hearing?

**Leah:** You got it. That's what we're here for. We are here to set up our health researchers for success.

**Peter:** Brilliant! So let's talk about the challenges that have been in the environment as well. Late last year, we heard from the Beatrice Hunter Cancer Research Institute that due to COVID-19, available funding was being reduced and scaling back available funding to New Brunswick researchers. I've heard a similar story from other partners. COVID-19 has really hurt the health charities in terms of donations, and that's affected their ability to fund the research and other partnerships, but I know you've been very creative with the Beatrice Hunter and trying to find some solutions. Maybe you can talk a little bit about that.

**Leah:** Yes, so the impact on Beatrice Hunter from the pandemic has been that they only have sufficient funds right now, for this round of opportunities, to fund applicants from Dalhousie University. So we came together to have these opportunities available to New Brunswick researchers as well. We asked,

and they agreed, that they'll continue to do peer review for New Brunswick applications for their programs. Even though they won't fund them, they'll still do the peer review, which is great.

It actually fits in perfectly with our programs, in such that we are going to fund anyone who has applied and got peer reviewed from Beatrice Hunter under our programs. It actually fits in perfectly. There are similar programs under Beatrice Hunter to those that we offer so that we could arrive at this arrangement. You know, the bridge grants, the establishment grants, the graduate student awards all fit in, and all those programs require that an application have been previously submitted to a national peer review agency. That worked out, so we are very happy that we are able to continue to fund cancer researchers here in the province, of which there are many, and many excellent ones as well.

That is specific to Beatrice Hunter. For the other charities, if you remember there's a lot, we just paused our partnerships with them. There's no negative impacts whatsoever for future years because this has happened. However, for a New Brunswick charity, which is the New Brunswick Heart and Stroke Foundation, we've embarked on a program for this year with them. We've partnered with them for an operating grant offering that they are going to do this year. It's going to be announced very soon, I'm even thinking this week.

**Peter:** Wow, some more hot news. You've got to sign on to these webinars to get the latest and greatest information. COVID-19, I've been hearing from a lot of charities, it's a big challenge, but it also saw a number of special programs. CIHR, to their credit, launched a program specifically related to that. Do you expect to see similar new programs this year? Has COVID-19 bred activity in the research funding space and how might we participate in that?

**Leah:** It's hard to say what CIHR will do, but I think on the whole funding agencies around the world are going to continue to address COVID-19. For example, something that I've heard about that is going to be explored, or that could be explored is whether or not there really is a true and measurable risk for families visiting seniors in long term care. That is an example of something that funding agencies might want to pursue. So yes, generally, I think there will be more programs.

So CIHR offered a number this year to address COVID-19, and we were able to partner on four of them actually, so that was wonderful. And as I say, working with CIHR as closely as we do, along with the other provincial health research agencies, they are wonderful about coming to us ahead of time and saying to us "We are rolling out this new program, do you want to partner?". In the past, over 10 years ago for sure, we might not have known about these opportunities, but the relationship has evolved such that we do. They keep us apprised of what their plans are, so that's great.

Partnerships with others is an objective of ours regardless of whether there is a specific disease are in mind, so we will continue to do that as we always have.

**Peter:** So we talked earlier on in this conversation, and it came up in the poll as well, about knowledge translation grants and funding. You said it was new, and it used to be travel, but I guess we're not travelling anymore, so what's this KT grant? Maybe you can tell us more a little bit more about it.

**Leah:** So it includes travel, we didn't get rid of travel completely, it includes travel. But it includes all the other things that can be done to mobilize or translate knowledge. Things like publication costs, maybe virtual attendance at things, production of posters. It's a little more comprehensive than just the travel grant. But similar to the travel grant, we require 50/50 matching funds from any source. It doesn't have

to be your institution, for example. We've had quite a bit of uptake when that was first launched, and I expect that to continue.

**Peter:** OK, last question from me. If you guys in attendance have any questions, just put them in the Q&A box and I'll try to get to them in the next few minutes.

But I want to take a future question. We see that the KT has changed in terms of evolution. Everything has to change at some point. Where do you think the NBHRF has to evolve? What are you hearing? What are the needs that are in the community right now? What needs to change for the future?

**Leah:** The thing that would be really nice to happen, from the health research perspective, would be for New Brunswick to become more and more successful in obtaining funds from national sources. National and international, for that matter. That would be really great, because that is bringing in money for the province. That generates opportunities for growth, for people to become high quality personnel, for people to advance in their career, for capacity building, for students and grad students, etc. So that's the wish. And it's something that we are still working on. New Brunswick continues to lag. I'm hearing a little bit of encouraging news on the national front. As I say, we work with CIHR quite a bit. But we'll continue to offer programs to assist our researchers in gaining the experience and establishing the research programs that they need to be successful at the national level. Everybody knows, as you know it too, it's a very competitive environment at the national level, especially at CIHR for health.

One of the things that is actually happening more at CIHR than it did – now it doesn't happen all the time, and it's just from program to program – they do offer regional funding. They don't do it for every program and you kind of don't know unless they give you the heads up, which they normally do, that there is going to be a regional pool associated with a particular program. That of course has helped in this regard, no question about it.

As I said, pursuing partnerships with other funding agencies, not just charities necessarily, though those are the most obvious in the health realm, but it doesn't have to be just charities. So continuing to explore those business development opportunities, I think will help us to grow and evolve. I think we'll probably come across different stuff that way.

Of course, we don't want to do that blindly. We review our priorities from time to time. We are doing that again. I think we'll be going out and consulting with our stakeholders to find out what their needs are, and what they think we can do to address them.

**Peter:** Very right, and actually that's the third disclosure we can put out to the webinar about going out to consult. So let the audience know that's coming.

As you know, we are government funded and our funding is up for renewal so we have applied for renewal on that again. Part of that is looking at our strategic plan and thinking what else can we do to further help, and where do we need to focus – in the three priorities or in the sub-programs. As Leah alluded to, we will be launching a consultation with the New Brunswick research community in the coming weeks, probably next month we'll get it off the ground.

But more of these webinars, but more of an actual session where we can start to get more input from the community. What are the gaps? We know the number one gap is always we need more money. Yes, and that is true, but where? Sometimes you've got to pick and choose, and what choices do you make? Is it bridge grants, is it establishment grants, awards, studentships? Which choices do we make? Is it more clinical scholarships? Our Board has had an active conversation in terms of increasing the focus

and attention for clinical scholarships and that's certainly something that we hope to do and we've put forward into our budget for the next year. But a lot more conversation needs to go on.

Part of that too is not doing it alone. We're also in conversations with NBIF as well as in conversation with NBSRN. Are there synergies to be had among the various organizations. Just to let everyone know this is certainly very active.

If I take a second in our last few minutes, I'm going to jump to the Q&A and see what are some of the questions here. Someone asked there is an NBIF COVID-19 Emergency Fund competition coming up. Are we partnering on this?

**Leah:** No, the reason for that is that the applicants must already be funded by NBIF.

**Peter:** Ok, so it's a restricted pool on that one.

There was a previous question from earlier on summer studentships that talked about one question we had about one person that was coming in and that was about to start their undergrad, they were not eligible. But what if they just completed their undergrad and about to start a Master's, would that make them eligible?

**Leah:** Yes, as long as we get documentation of their intent to apply or their application to university for the fall.

**Peter:** Ok. Other questions, I think we went through them all. You answered all their questions Leah!

Well, if there are no more questions, we're going to give the gift of time to our attendees who've been listening in. Hopefully you've found this session useful. As we mentioned at the start, this recording will be put up on the nbhrf.com website in the coming days. We will also build up a Q&A document for some of these tips that you heard today.

In closing, I just want to thank Leah. Thanks for your insight and help there. I also want to do a call out to Patricia Seaman and Louise Goodwin back at the office, for all their work behind the scenes to make this all happen. They are all the skill and brilliance behind it all and thank you very much for listening, reach out anytime! Take care all.

**Leah:** Thanks everybody!