

**Call for projects 2020-21- Inter-network initiatives
Vision Health Research Network (VHRN) and Quebec Network for
Cell, Tissue and Gene Therapy (ThéCell)**
Guide and application form

Program description

This joint program between the VHRN and ThéCell Networks aims to promote interactions between researchers from Quebec networks who carry out research on issues common to both partner networks. Proposed projects must be aligned with the networks' mission and focus on the respective research themes of the concerned networks. This funding should be used for at least one of the following purposes:

- Generate knowledge and data that can lead to a concrete clinical or health care application;
- Obtain sufficient preliminary data to allow the team to submit funding requests to granting agencies;
- Serve as leverage for larger grants from partners to conduct a long-term research program;
- Allow Quebec researchers to establish their leadership at the national and international levels in the targeted research themes;
- Allow, as much as possible, to have an activity or a product dedicated to knowledge transfer toward users or target populations.

A project corresponding to the research areas of the networks and tied to at least one of the above objectives will be funded based on excellence. This project must involve at least one regular member of each network (VHRN and ThéCell). The project may involve more than two Quebec research centers, as well as other centers in Canada (e.g., with a member of OIRM (*Ontario Institute for Regenerative Medicine*)) or internationally. Projects may come from any research axis: 1) fundamental; 2) pre-clinical; 3) clinical; 4) health system / care organisation and 5) population intervention and sharing / use of knowledge. The eligibility criteria and the evaluation method are described below. One project of excellent scientific quality demonstrating a structuring effect for research within the two networks will be funded at the level of \$ 20,000 for one year.

The deadline for submitting applications is ~~November 1st~~, December 13th, 2020, 23h59, for funding beginning no later than February 20, 2021.

Requests submitted late, incomplete or that do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be evaluated.

Eligibility and Evaluation Criteria

1. The application must involve two principal researchers: a regular member of the VHRN and a regular member of the ThéCell; Please note that if a researcher is member of both networks, he must choose one network affiliation under which he will apply to this particular program;
2. **Only one application per year as a principal investigator** can be submitted for the Inter-Network Initiatives competition. There is no limit as a co-investigator. Researchers who have obtained funding for a ThéCell structuring project may submit a new project to this Inter-Network competition if the nature of the project and the team is sufficiently different from the projects already funded.
3. For projects of equal quality, new collaborations between researchers will be favored during evaluation;
 - o **List of ThéCell members:** <http://www.reseauthecell.qc.ca/index.php/members>;
 - o **List of VHRN members:** <http://reseauvision.ca/a-propos-du-reseau/bottin/>;
4. The inclusion of at least one young researcher eligible for the FRQS Junior 1 will be considered favorably;
5. Applications may include additional centers in Quebec, in Canada (*e.g., a member of the Stem Cell Network (SCN)*) or internationally; but funds can only be attributed to Quebec researchers that are members of one of the networks;
6. It is highly recommended to involve at least one student, postdoctoral fellow or resident (*registered at a Quebec university*), as well as a knowledge user;
7. Demonstration of the structuring effect for research within the networks, according to their objectives (*e.g., establishment of new inter-sectoral collaborations within the network or internationally, standardization of methods, implementation platform or common resources*);
8. Demonstration of a clear plan for obtaining subsequent funding from an external organization other than the VHRN or ThéCell (*e.g., CIHR, private partner or other*);
9. It is the responsibility of researchers to ensure that they follow good research practices and obtain and maintain all necessary certifications from their respective institutions (*e.g., radiation protection, biosafety, animal or human ethical committee approval, authorizations associated with controlled substances used in the project*).

Duration of the awards

The \$ 20,000 award is granted for a period of one year (beginning at the start date of the funding period) and is non renewable. Expenditures must be made during this period and must comply with FRQS policies.

Obligations of researchers towards the program

By applying to this program and if they are subsidized, the researchers commit to:

1. Acknowledge networks support as an initial funding agency in any publication (e.g., abstract, peer-reviewed article) or poster or oral presentation resulting from this research;
2. Produce a progress report at the end of the year (at the end of the funding period). This report will summarize the status of the research results, including copies of articles published as a result of this research. In addition, annual monitoring for another three (3) years will be conducted to document the impact of this project;
3. Produce financial reports at its home network at the end of each fiscal year in which funds were used (March 31 and at the end of the project).
4. Participate in the annual retreat or annual meeting/scientific day of its home network in order to keep all members informed of the results of the funded project;
5. Notify the Networks of any positive decision of granting agencies related to the subsidized project.

Documents required for submission

1. The Word form " **VHRN/ThéCell Inter-Network Initiatives Application form**" duly completed and saved in PDF format and the accompanying documents:
All these documents (in PDF format) must be sent by email in carbon copy to reseau.vision@ircm.qc.ca and Friederike.pfau@crchudequebec.ulaval.ca;
- a. An up-to-date curriculum vitae (FRQS version *including the Detailed Contributions section* or CCV (<https://ccv-cvc.ca>) along with a publication list for the last 5 years) for every researcher participating in the application. For all researchers outside Quebec, an equivalent of one of these CV models is accepted.
- b. Figures grouped into one single PDF file (if applicable).

Applications Assessment Process

An external scientific committee will be formed to evaluate all applications submitted. The co-chairmanship of the committee will be held by a member of the executive committee of each network who has not submitted an application. Competition results will be announced in February following the submission date.

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1) Originality of the request and scientific merit of the project (40 points):

- **Clarity and testability of hypotheses (10):**
 - *Originality of the hypotheses, clarity of the research question and clarity of scientific rationale;*
 - *Feasibility of the methodological approach in the proposed financial framework.*
- **Realistic and well-defined objectives (10):**
 - *Appropriate experimental design to attain objective.;*
 - *Potential to create new knowledge.*

- **Methodology and analysis (20):**
 - *Novelty of the approach, new methodologies, or new application of existing methodologies including participant recruitment, access to databases, laboratory methods or any other data collection method.*

2) Competence and complementarity of the research team (30 points):

- **New collaboration, quality of research teams and multicentricity (30):**
 - *The relevance of each Research Theme/Networks should be clearly identified in this section;*
 - *Establishment of new intersectoral local or international collaborations;*
 - *Scientific achievements, history of publication, funding and students training;*
 - *Complementarity of the participating teams (e.g., how the expertise of each will be used to carry out the project).*

3) Potential impact and structuring effect for research within networks (30 points):

- **Relevance, scientific or clinical impact of the project related to the participating networks and their themes (20):**
 - *Immediate or potential impact of the proposed project on research within the networks, according to their objectives;*
 - *Standardization of methods, establishment of a platform or common resources.*
- **Plan to obtain external funding for the project (10):**
 - *Clarity and feasibility of the plan to obtain future or concomitant funding from sources external to VHRN / ThéCell (e.g., CIHR, foundations, private partners).*

4) Realism of the budget proposal (complementary information):

- **Budget justification:**
 - *Relevance of the proposed use of the funds.*

Any requests for additional information may be directed to the **Coordinator** of VHRN (**Valérie Lavastre, PhD**, email: reseau.vision@ircm.qc.ca) or to the **Coordinator** of the Quebec Network for Cell, Tissue and Gene Therapy (ThéCell), **Friederike Pfau**, Tél.: 418-525-4444 ext. 61685, email: Friederike.pfau@crchudequebec.ulaval.ca .

VHRN/ThéCell Inter-Network Initiatives Application form

SECTION 1

IDENTIFICATION OF THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS (VHRN AND THÉCELL NETWORKS)

Name of the Principal Investigator from VHRN (Regular Member):

Main affiliation:

I am a young researcher (eligible for the FRQS Junior 1): yes no

Affiliation to other research networks (several possible choices):

- Another FRQS Network (which one or which ones?);
- Others.

Could this project have an impact on the understanding and or the treatment of ARMD?

yes no

Name of the Principal Investigator from ThéCell (Regular Member):

Main affiliation:

I am a young researcher (eligible for the FRQS Junior 1): yes no

Affiliation to other research networks (several possible choices):

- Another FRQS Network (which one or which?);
- Stem Cell Network
- Others.

SECTION 2 GENERAL INFORMATION

Project title: (max. 256 characters including spaces)

Project title in French: (max. 256 characters including spaces)

Theme(s) VHRN Network (several choices possible):

- Retina and posterior segment
- Cornea and anterior segment
- Brain and perception
- Visual deficiency and rehabilitation

Theme(s) ThéCell (several choices possible):

- Musculoskeletal and nervous systems
- Cardiovascular, pulmonary, renal and digestive systems
- Skin and ocular systems
- Hematology, Oncology and Immunology

Axes or type of research (several choices possible):

- Fundamental research
- Pre-clinical research
- Clinical research
- Translational research

SECTION 2.1

CO-INVESTIGATORS (Possibility of 7 co-investigators) (duplicate this section if needed)

Co-investigator's Name (LAST NAME, First name):

Affiliation:

I am a young researcher (eligible for the FRQS Junior 1): yes no

Affiliation to research networks (several possible choices):

- VHRN network;
- ThéCell network.
- Another FRQS Network (*which*);
- Stem Cell Network;
- Others (*which*).

SECTION 2.2

Students

- 1. Name (LAST NAME, first name) of the student, postdoctoral fellow or resident directly involved in the project:**
 - a. Current study program and level of study:
 - b. Affiliation:
 - c. Name of the research director:

- 2. Other students, postdoctoral fellows, residents or research professionals involved in the project, if relevant** (Name, level of study in progress or position (function), name of research director and affiliation):

SECTION 2.3

Knowledge users, research centres and location

- 1. Name (and affiliation) of knowledge user(s) directly involved in the project:**

- 2. Quebec research centers directly involved in the work:**

- 3. Research Center(s) outside Quebec directly involved in the work (optional):**

- 4. Location(s) of Research:** Name of the city(ies) (e.g., Sherbrooke and Quebec City) where research will take place and a short description if necessary.

SECTION 3

PROJECT SUMMARY *(max. 2200 characters including spaces per summary (ENGLISH and FRENCH))*

Provide a summary of the project to present the general idea of this Inter-Network Initiative.

Also provide a **French** version of this summary:

(Note: This summary may be evaluated by representatives of the general public, and abstracts of funded projects may be used as a press release and will be posted on our Networks' website).

SECTION 4**PROJECT DESCRIPTION** *(max. 10 000 characters including spaces (excluding references - see section # 5))*

Provide a description of the project including scientific rationale, objectives and hypotheses, methodology and potential benefits. Please also include a paragraph that presents the originality of your project (*Potential for creating new knowledge, originality of hypotheses and research questions, novelty of the approach, new methodologies or new application of existing methodologies*). Please structure the text with the following sections:

- Objectives;
- Hypothesis;
- Methodology;
- Analysis.

Figures can be added as an appendix only, as a single PDF file of maximum 3 pages (see *Documents required for submission* above). Please note that all essential elements for the evaluation must be in the text and not in the appendix.

Evaluation criteria:***Originality of the request and scientific merit of the project (40 points):***

- **Clarity and testability of hypotheses (10)**
 - *Originality of the hypotheses and clarity of the research question and scientific rationale.*
 - *Feasibility of the methodological approach in the proposed financial framework.*
- **Realistic and well-defined objectives (10)**
 - *Appropriate experimental design to attain objectives.*
 - *Potential to create new knowledge.*
- **Methodology and analysis / Methodology and analysis (20)**
 - *Novelty of the approach, new methodologies, or new application of existing methodologies. including participant recruitment, access to databases, laboratory methods or any other data collection method.*

SECTION 5
BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

Provide all bibliographic references related to the submission.

SECTION 6**COMPETENCE AND COMPLEMENTARITY OF THE RESEARCH TEAM**

(max. 2800 characters including spaces)

Provide a description of the team formed and its complementarity, scientific achievements, history of publication, funding, and student training (*e.g., how each person's expertise will be used to carry out the project*).

Evaluation criteria:***Competence and complementarity of the research team (30 points):***

- **New collaboration, Quality of research teams and Multicentricity (30)**
 - *The relevance of each Research Theme / Networks should be clearly identified in this section.*
 - *Establishment of new local or international intersectoral collaborations.*
 - *Scientific achievements, history of publication, funding and training of students.*
 - *Complementarity of the participating teams (e.g., how the expertise of each will be used to carry out the project).*

SECTION 7**STRUCTURING EFFECT FOR RESEARCH BETWEEN NETWORKS***(max. 1400 characters including spaces for each subsection)*

7.1 Provide a description of the structuring impact of the research project in terms of the objectives of the networks (e.g., *establishment of new inter-sectoral collaborations within/between the networks or internationally, standardization of methods, implementation of a platform or common resources*).

7.2 Provide a plan for obtaining external funding. Describe the strategies that will be used to obtain subsequent or concomitant funding from sources outside VHRN and ThéCell.

Evaluation criteria:***Potential impact and structuring effect for research within networks and external funding potential (30 points):***

- **Relevance, scientific or clinical impact of the project related to the participating networks and their themes (20)**
 - *Immediate or potential impact of the proposed project on research within the networks, according to their objectives.*
 - *Standardization of methods, establishment of a platform or common resources.*
- **Potential for external funding following the pilot project (10)**
 - *Clarity and feasibility of the plan for obtaining future or concomitant funding*

SECTION 8

BUDGETARY CONTEXT AND JUSTIFICATION (MAX. 1400 CHARACTERS INCLUDING SPACES)

Summary budget and complementary sources of funding:

Provide a summary description of the use of the funds. Indicate if any source of concomitant funding and the amounts that will be used for the progression of the project. Note that overheads are not eligible.

For the 20 000\$ granted, 10 000\$ comes from VHRN and 10 000\$ from ThéCell. Please provide the funds repartition between the co-applicants.

Realism of the budget proposal:

- **Budget justification**
 - *Relevance of the proposed use of the funds.*