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Participatory Action Research Grant Guidelines

Participatory Action Research Grants (PAR) support research that is co-led by community members and researchers to learn more about the root causes of pressing issues impacting the health of communities.

December 2022

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READ THIS FIRST

Are you eligible and ready to apply?

Participatory Action Research (PAR) Grants support research that is co-led by community members and researchers to learn more about the root causes of pressing issues impacting the health of communities. **The research must be a collaboration between a community organization and institution with access to an ethics board, such as a university, health authority or other research-based organization.** If your project doesn't involve research, or if it isn't co-led by community members and researchers, then please consider other funders who may be more aligned with your work.

Before you continue through this guide, please confirm that the organization acting as the primary applicant is a [qualified donee listed by the Canada Revenue Agency](#)¹

What this program funds, and what it doesn't

At Vancouver Foundation, we believe in creating meaningful and lasting impacts in communities across British Columbia. Our PAR Grants Program funds research projects that enable communities to create lasting changes within and across systems. We view the participatory action research approach to be a social innovation, because it includes affected populations as partners at all stages of the research process, instead of seeing them only as research subjects.

Participatory Action Research Grants funds research projects that:

- **are led by at least one qualified donee** listed by the Canada Revenue Agency
- **use a participatory action research** methodology
- **investigate the social determinants of health**; for example, by trying to better understand how systems behaviours work to create a complex issue (or to hold it in place), or how systems behaviours impact the health of certain groups
- **collaborate within and across sectors**, most notably through partnerships between community and research organizations, and by breaking down the silos between health and social services, education, employment, environment, or arts and culture, among others
- **are bold, creative, and equitable** in their participatory approach to understanding the social determinants of health

¹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/charities-giving/list-charities/list-charities-other-qualified-donees.html>

- **have the potential to create lasting change** for communities across British Columbia by building new knowledge that leads to action

We fund participatory action research projects that investigate any of the social determinants impacting the health of communities or populations. In addition, we have some funding that is specific to research into complex issues faced by people living with heart disease, cancer, arthritis, mental health, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's disease, and neurological, emotional or paediatric disorders.

We also have some dedicated funding for investigating systems of employee assistance and/or workplace performance.

Participatory Action Research Grants don't fund:

- projects that take place primarily outside of BC
- an organization's ongoing operational or core expenses, including its cost to fundraise
- project expenses that have been incurred prior to the application date or that we feel should be covered by other funding sources
- event sponsorships (unless part of a broader project proposal)
- bridge funding, debt retirement, reserves, or mortgage pay-downs
- endowment matching grants
- capital and public infrastructure projects (libraries, schools, health care facilities)
- travel to and/or attendance at conferences, competitions, symposia or annual events (unless part of a broader project proposal)
- bursaries, scholarships, and awards (unless part of a broader project proposal)

Still not sure if you should apply? We're here to help.

Vancouver Foundation has staff available to help you see your work through a systems change lens, and to help you to decide if it's the right time to apply to this grant program.

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH GRANTS: PROGRAM OVERVIEW

In these guidelines, we review some background information that may help you complete the grant application. We outline the different types of grants available, the eligibility requirements, and the overall application process.

Please read carefully: the questions we ask in our application form may be different from what you're accustomed to seeing in other grant applications.

The social determinants of health

The biggest factors influencing whether populations of people will be healthy or ill aren't necessarily lifestyle factors like diet, smoking, or exercise. They aren't even genetic factors, or access to health services. The most important factors influencing the health of populations are life circumstances: income and income distribution, education, social support networks and social exclusion, employment and working conditions, early childhood development, gender identity and sexual orientation, and the physical environment. Together, these factors are known as the **social determinants of health**.^{2,3}

The social determinants of health are shaped by the distribution of money, power, and resources, and are responsible for the differences in health status within and between communities and countries.⁴ Many decisions about how money, power, and resources are distributed are made at local, provincial, and national levels, and these decisions often become our laws, policies, and practices. Consequently, many of the systems behaviours that have some of the biggest impact on our health are mostly beyond our control as individuals. It also means that action taken at the community, provincial, and national levels to influence or change these systems behaviours has the potential to impact the health and well-being of a large group of people.

Participatory action research

Participatory Action Research is a collaborative approach to research that involves stakeholders – those whose lives are affected by the issue being studied – and researchers in all phases of the research process. PAR has many definitions, but it tends to have these features in common:⁵

- researchers and community members are active co-participants
- researchers and community members learn from each other
- the research team uses a process of critical reflection
- the research is action-oriented to influence systems change

² Mikkonen, J., & Raphael, D. (2010). Social Determinants of Health: The Canadian Facts. Toronto: York University School of Health Policy and Management. www.thecanadianfacts.org/

³ Healthy, Wealthy, & Why: The Social Determinants, Explained: via Upstream http://www.thinkupstream.net/healthy_wealthy_why

⁴ World Health Organization: Social Determinants of Health. http://www.who.int/social_determinants/sdh_definition/en/

⁵ McIntyre, A. Participatory Action Research. Thousand Oaks (CA): SAGE Publications, Inc.; 2008. Available from: SAGE Publishing. <http://us.sagepub.com>

At the core of PAR is the belief that research must be done with people, and not for them or on them.⁶ The 'action' part of PAR refers to how evidence is gathered, and how issues are researched. The action becomes part of the subject matter being researched. Action happens throughout the project by the team to develop the research and inform its future direction. Action also means that research moves beyond just observing or studying an issue, and focuses on using the research findings to transform it.

The PAR Grants Program only funds participatory action research projects related to the social determinants of health. We believe that PAR is an innovative approach to research that engages communities and leads to meaningful action. PAR uses the expertise of participants based on their lived experience, and the specialized training of researchers, to build and implement a research project. Most PAR projects involve a process of reflection, which can lead to meaningful action in communities.

Vancouver Foundation focuses on the social determinants of health because we believe it has the greatest potential to impact the lives of communities and populations.

EXAMPLE: Preventing and Reducing Harms of Substance Use in Homeless Shelter Programs

With drug-related overdose deaths increasing rapidly, there is an urgent need to understand the risk factors for homeless shelter residents. By holding focus groups with shelter staff, residents, and harm reduction workers, researchers are learning more about the crisis and what can be done to resolve it.

What participation looks like at every stage of research

Choosing a topic and designing the research project

- The research question is related to a pressing issue that the community has identified.
- The research findings have the potential to allow community to take direct action in the future to influence the systemic behaviours that have created or sustained a pressing health issue.
- The project has an advisory group - community members (including people with living experience), researchers, and other stakeholders - who agree on how the project will be run, how decisions will be made, how conflicts will be resolved, and so on.

⁶ Chevalier, JM and Buckles, DJ. Participatory Action Research: Theory and Methods for Engaged Inquiry. UK: Routledge; 2013.

- People's roles on the team are based on their interests, knowledge, skills, and experience.
- All team members value each other's expertise (e.g., lived experience, research skills).

Data collection

- The team decides how best to allocate data collection duties (e.g., administrative databases, surveys, focus groups, one-on-one interviews), and identifies any training required to do the data collection (e.g. mock interviews for practice).
- The team works through the question of who owns the research data, and whether it can be shared openly. (Data and Information collected should respect Indigenous Principles of Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession ([OCAP](#)) and may be shared via a Creative Commons License such as [CC-BY-4.0](#) or in accordance with your research institution's open access policy.

Analysis

- All team members provide insight into how to interpret the data, the implications of the results, and what kinds of conclusions can be drawn.

Knowledge Exchange and Taking Action

- Team members share results within and across their communities (e.g., reports, round tables, community meetings, research conferences, etc.).
- Team members consider how to use the evidence to take action, and the most useful/appropriate form of action to take.
- Community members are co-authors on research articles submitted to academic journals.

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH: GRANT TYPES

We offer two different grant types to reflect the different stages of a participatory action research process: **Convene** and **Investigate**. Each of these grant types is described in more detail in the following pages.

At a glance

	CONVENE	INVESTIGATE
Purpose of grant	To develop a participatory action research project plan	To investigate a question about the root cause(s) of a pressing issue impacting the health of communities
Maximum funding available	Up to \$20,000 (\$10,000 for process plus up to an additional \$10,000 for community/ stakeholder participation)	Up to \$100,000 per year
Length of grant	Up to 1 year	Up to 3 years
Requires matching funds	No	No
Application process	One-stage	Two-stage

Convene grants

Convene grants are short-term grants to help teams develop a participatory action research project plan that can be submitted to funding organizations.

Convene grants are suited to:

- Activities that help potential teams of researchers, knowledge-users and/or community stakeholders to work together to identify research questions or emerging issues that could then form the basis of a future Investigate grant.
- Initial planning and discussion of a research project among potential team members including researchers, knowledge-users and/or partners to assess the viability of the research project and the partnership.
- Stakeholder consultations and citizen engagement activities that help to solidify a research question or the direction of a research project.
- Establishing relationships with key stakeholders who inform practice, care, and/or policy in ways that could lead to a future grant application.

Convene grants are a one-stage application. You submit a short, but complete online application through our [grant management system \(GMS\)](#). The steps and questions are detailed in our [Convene Application Guide](#).

You can refer to our PAR [Grants Program webpage](#) for both Convene and Investigate timelines listed under the Key Dates section.

Investigate grants

Investigate grants are multi-year grants to help teams answer a research question, analyze their findings, and share knowledge in a way that supports the community to take action in the future.

Investigate grants are suited to:

- Support research teams with a clear and viable participatory research plan that is grounded in the exploration of a complex issue affecting the health of a population.
- Encourage collaboration and knowledge exchange between and among communities, organizations and institutions affected by or interested in the pressing issue.
- Are led by communities and are intended to inform and lead to evidence-based action in the future.

Investigate grants are a two-stage application. The first stage is to submit a Stage One project overview through our online grant management system (GMS). Then if you're invited to proceed to the second stage, you submit a Full Application. It usually takes us about five months from the Stage One application submission deadline to process applications through both stages. You can refer to our PAR Grants Program webpage for timelines listed under the Key Dates section.

Stage One: Project Overview

We'll need a project overview, including information about the Applicant and Partner organizations, the research project you're proposing, the research team, and a budget. The steps and questions are detailed in the [Investigate Application Guide](#). We'll review your Stage One application and then decide whether to invite you to submit a full proposal.

Stage Two: Full Application (by invitation only)

If you're invited to submit a full proposal on our [online grant management system \(GMS\)](#), we'll ask for more details about your research project, a detailed timeline of activities, and some supplementary materials. We'll review your full proposal and then decide whether to fund your project.

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL GRANT APPLICATION

1. Determine if you are eligible.

Assess whether your organization and project is eligible for Vancouver Foundation funding.

2. Be sure you're applying to the right program and grant type

Review the [At a Glance](#) table (pg. 7) for an overview of the different grant types. If you're not sure which grant type is right for you, then please contact one of our Grant Managers. Our Grant Managers are also available to help you think through your proposal. You can contact them to talk through your idea or to help understand how your project might fit within the different grant types.

3. Read through the application process according to the grant type you are applying for

This will help you answer the questions we ask you in our online application form. It may also help you get a sense of the amount of time the application is likely to take, and the type of information you'll need to have ready.

4. Paint a clear picture of your project

Our reviewers need a clear picture of what you're hoping to accomplish so that they can decide whether your project should be recommended for funding. The more specific you can be about all aspects of the project (how you plan to conduct the research, and the resources you'll need), the easier it will be for the reviewers to decide.

That means:

- you've clearly described the who, what, when, where, and how of your proposal
- your budget aligns with your project activities (for Investigate only)
- your project timeline is realistic, and aligns with your budget (for Investigate only)

the proposal's narrative, budget and timeline all describe the same project, in a different way (for Investigate only)

5. Be sure you're ready to take on a participatory action research project

Participatory action research requires an intentional investment of time and resources. Partnerships and research activities might only proceed after months of development work and discussions. It's not something anyone can do well "off the side of their desk."

You may want to consult with your Board of Directors, staff, volunteers, donors or community members to ensure that if your proposal is funded, you and your team will be able to take on the new work and keep your other work going.