

Local Guidelines and Application Process - AFP

Last Approved:	NOAMA Board	October 21, 2025
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1.0 BACKGROUND

The Innovation Fund was established by the Alternative Funding Plan agreement between the Academic Physicians, the Ontario Medical Association (OMA) and the Ontario Ministry of Health (MOH). Until recently, ~\$10M was provided annually by the MOH to Academic Physicians to support the development of new and innovative approaches to health care delivery and to provide leadership in the dissemination of new knowledge across the healthcare system. Now ~\$20M is being provided to AHSC AFP Governance Organizations annually, in proportion to their allocation of FTEs (Excerpt from Provincial Guidelines)

The NOAMA AFP Innovation Funding intends to provide physician clinical faculty with an opportunity to access seed funding to support innovative projects and to enable them to develop a program sufficiently to qualify for additional support and to facilitate the translation of new knowledge and strategies into medical practice.

The AFP Innovation Fund Sub-Committee manages the AFP Innovation Fund local process and formulates recommendations regarding funding approval of AFP Innovation Fund projects to the NOAMA Board. The NOAMA Board, in turn, submits recommended projects to the Innovation Fund Provincial Oversight Committee (IFPOC).

The Sub-Committee also reviews the progress reports for approved projects for consideration of funding continuation based on the allocated funding achieving the project objectives.

2.0 CRITERIA FOR THE INNOVATION FUND

2.1 Eligibility:

- a) The principal investigator(s) and any physician receiving payments under an AFP Innovation Fund project must be a participating physician in the NOAMA AFP.
- b) The principal investigator(s) is primarily responsible for the project. This includes, but is not limited to: following ethical standards, data collection and analysis, project timelines and completion, interim and final reporting.
- c) The project must indicate a topic and description that is in-scope as defined by the Provincial AHSC AFP Innovation Fund Guidelines.
- d) The principal investigator and co-investigator(s) on the project application must be compliant with the local guidelines and application process of any outstanding NOAMA (AFP & CIOF) projects in which they are involved.

- The NOAMA Board will review, based on a recommendation from the AFP subcommittee, on a case-by-case basis, projects of non-compliance with the guidelines and application process. A non-exhaustive list of examples:
 - Project does not start within approved timeline
 - Project not completed within the approved timeframe
 - Project does not adhere to the approved budget
 - Project unused funding not returned to NOAMA
 - For the above cases, the NOAMA Board will determine the severity of the contract breach and would consider options that could include temporary or permanent restrictions from reapplying for future NOAMA grants.
- e) If required, extensions should be submitted to NOAMA for approval. An extension does not supersede the approved guidelines or impact eligibility, but approved extensions will allow for successful completion of the NOAMA funded grant.
- f) To align with NOAMA's commitment to providing seed funding and ensuring equitable access to research opportunities:
 - If a Principal Investigator (PI) has not received a NOAMA AFP grant in the last five years, an additional +0.2 points will be applied to their proposal score during the administrative adjustment phase of the review process.
 - These adjustments will apply to the standard CIHR 5-point scoring scale and are intended to reflect the spirit of the NOAMA funds as a development tool for emerging clinical researchers.
- g) To maintain broad access and prevent over-concentration of limited funding:
 - A Principal Investigator who was successful in receiving AFP funding in the previous competition year will not be eligible to receive AFP funding in the current cycle.
 - This restriction applies only to the Principal Investigator role and does not preclude participation as a Co-Investigator or team member on other applications.

2.2 Funding:

a) Funding Limitation

NOAMA accepts budgets at \$30k/annum. One grant at \$60k/annum (\$120k over two years) may be awarded in the "Mid-Scale Grant Category" (grant must score a scientific merit of outstanding or excellent through the peer review process). Of note, those that apply in this category would only be eligible for the \$60k/annum category. They would not be considered for funding at the lower budget category of \$30k/annum if unsuccessful. Project funding is only available from one of NOAMA's grant funding sources for the project, AFP Innovation funds or Clinical Innovation.

b) Capital Assets

Capital equipment is limited to **10% of the requested NOAMA funding.**

c) **Travel**

Up to 10% of the NOAMA funded portion may be used to support travel directly related to the funded project, such as presenting research findings at conferences, workshops, or similar academic events.

Eligible travel expenses include transportation, accommodation, and per diems in accordance with institutional or CIHR travel policies. Travel should be necessary to the achievement of the project objectives and should represent the most economical and practical option available.

d) **Multiple Project Submissions**

Applicants can submit more than one project; however, the AFP Innovation Fund Sub-Committee will recommend only one (if any) of the projects for funding in the same period.

e) **Other Funding**

Project leads are to indicate if they have applied for or are receiving funding from other sources. In these cases, the applicant must specify the project components (expenditures), which will be paid from the NOAMA funding.

f) **Timing**

The funding is a one-time investment over an agreed-upon limited time frame, but no longer than two years. Funding can only be provided for the initial year with the release of the second year is contingent on an annual review process to ensure the project is on time and is achieving its stated objectives.

g) **Funded Projects - Start-Date Requirement**

Funded projects must start within eight (8) months of the offer of funding. Any projects not starting within this timeframe will be subject to cancellation, and the designated funding will be offered to an approved NOAMA contingency project.

h) **Reserved Funding for First-Time Applicants:**

To further encourage early-stage clinician engagement in research, NOAMA will designate a minimum of 40% of total AFP funding to proposals led by first-time applicants (defined as PIs who have not been awarded a NOAMA grant within the last five years).

- To be eligible for this reserved pool, applications must meet the minimum fundable threshold score (currently 3.5 out of 5) as determined by the AFP peer review process
- This reserved allocation will be applied annually and evaluated for impact on funding equity and accessibility

2.3 Submission Requirements (including Budget):

- a) The project must include a target start date, an implementation plan, a budget, and provide indicators of progress against which the success of the project will be measured.

- b) The Provincial Guidelines stipulate what budget items are acceptable and what documentation is required. As a minimum, budget documentation includes budget assumptions as well as supporting calculations and explanations for the individual budget items.
- c) Approved local AFP Physician compensation guidelines or Provincial Guidelines, if required, will be applied to all successful projects.
Use of Innovation Funds for physician remuneration may not exceed current OMA Per Diem rates whether or not this remuneration is for actual clinical activity.
- d) The resource implications for other Institutions must be considered. If there are resource implications (space, staff, and resources) to other institutions such as a hospital, research institute, university, NOSM U, etc., formal written approval by the institution is required. A letter of support must be included with the project submission.
- e) The proposal should articulate a continuity plan if the project term exceeds the funding term. Continuity support from other institutions such as hospitals and or Universities cannot be assumed.

2.4 Ethical Review

The release of funding will be conditional upon receiving ethical clearance(s) from an appropriate Research Ethics Board (REB) or a letter stating that REB approval is not required for the project(s).

NOSM University's Research Office is available to assist with the ethics review process. They can be contacted at research@nosm.ca

2.5 Funding Management

For individuals or groups awarded AFP IFPOC funding, a demonstration of an approved Northern Ontario transfer payment agency must be made. Project Leads are required to follow the approved procedures of the transfer payment agency.

Examples of an approved transfer agency include the hospital, university, or Local Education Group that the principal investigator has an association.

3.0 APPLICATION PROCESS

All funding competition forms are-PDF fillable forms with word limits. The use of these forms is a-requirement for IFPOC.

1. Applicants must receive approval through NOSM University's ROMEQ system. For more information, go to [NOSM U's ROMEQ page](#)

2. Applicants are to complete and submit the following fillable forms to NOAMA:
 - a. P1 – Project Proposal
 - b. P2 – Project Budget

Forms P1 and P2 must be submitted **by email** grants@noama.ca

3. Each application submitted will be acknowledged within 15 to 20 business days after the application deadline date to allow NOAMA staff time to complete the intake and record submissions received.
4. Out of consideration for all applicants, NOAMA is unable to accept incomplete or late applications.

4.0 PROPOSAL REVIEW AND FUNDING PROCESS

- a) All projects which meet the approved guidelines for submission will be reviewed and rated by the AFP Innovation Project Review Team for recommendation to the AFP Innovation Fund Sub-Committee. The AFP Innovation Fund Sub-Committee has comprehensive membership representing all signatories to the NOAMA agreement.
- b) Physicians who have made applications for AFP Innovation Funding are considered to have a conflict of interest concerning participation on the NOAMA Board, the AFP Innovation Sub-Committee, Review Team, and PCTA Board, and are required to recuse themselves from discussions regarding AFP Innovation Funding recommendations.
- c) Approved Provincial application criteria are considered during the evaluation process, and a scoring system similar to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Scoring System will be used to determine the score of each project. The AFP Innovation Fund Review Team and the Sub-Committee formulate consensus-based recommendations. The AFP Innovation Fund Sub-Committee recommends, to the NOAMA Board for consideration, project submissions to the IFPOC.
- d) Notification of NOAMA Board funding decisions is communicated in writing to the applicants as soon as possible after the NOAMA Board meeting. Pending IFPOC approval, successful applicants will be notified of approved funding support for the initial year with the release of the remaining funding contingent on an annual review process to ensure the project is achieving its stated objectives. Applicants whose projects do not merit funding are provided reviewer comments, which may include feedback to assist in consideration for submission at the next call for projects.
- e) Approved proposals are subject to a 5% administrative fee. NOAMA recognizes the significance of The Provincial AHSC AFP Innovation Fund and its benefits; therefore, NOAMA will forgive the administrative fee if the contract is fulfilled.
- f) Peer Review Grievances:

- a. The following details NOAMA's stance on peer review grievances and informs expectations about their possible outcomes, with the aim of facilitating their appropriate handling and reference to those aspects of peer review for which NOAMA assumes responsibility.
- b. Statement
 - i. Peer review is the internationally accepted benchmark for ensuring quality and excellence in scientific research. Peer review is also a human process, dependent on a reviewer's self-assessed ability to review and subject to their professional opinions and judgments, which are not always agreeable to applicants. Given that peer review is the accepted method for reviewing funding applications, NOAMA believes that these human elements are intrinsic to the process and not subject to appeal.
- c. Enquiries and Complaints
 - i. Applicants are free to enquire or voice concerns regarding their peer review results. Such information is essential in terms of quality assurance, training and communication efforts, as well as in support of continuous peer-review process and system improvements. NOAMA's further response will be dictated by the nature of the enquiry or complaint.
- d. Procedural Errors
 - i. NOAMA will only review a funding decision if there was a procedural error in the peer-review process that demonstrably affected the peer review recommendation.
- e. Examples of procedural errors are (including but not limited to):
 - i. Incomplete applications sent to peer reviewers due to NOAMA system errors;
 - ii. Incorrect peer review rankings due to errors in calculation or data entry.
 - iii. Overturning a funding decision is only considered for exceptional circumstances.
- f. Non-Reviewable Aspects of Peer Review
 - i. NOAMA will not rule on any aspect of the peer review process stemming from a peer reviewer's scientific assessment of an application, the applicants, or the proposed research program. More specifically, NOAMA will not review or rule on cases where:
 - 1. the various reviewers differ in their assessment of the proposed research
 - 2. the applicants believe that the reviewers have mischaracterized the application or the proposed research
 - 3. applicants believe reviewers did not have the appropriate expertise to assess the application.
- g. Responsibilities of NOAMA

- i. NOAMA staff will investigate inquiries to determine whether a procedural error took place and negatively affect the peer review recommendation. Further actions will be taken on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the NOAMA Subcommittee. NOAMA staff will not pursue any grievances related to those matters covered in this Section or further investigate any errors that did not affect the funding recommendation.

5.0 Reporting

Project Leads are required to submit Final Project Reports and Final Budgets within 18 months after the end of the project term, whether or not you have finished the project. At the end of this period, regardless of the status of the project, a report is required, and unspent funds are subject to return.

6.0 Recognition of Funding

All publications and presentations related to the project funded from the NOAMA AHSC AFP Innovation Funds are to acknowledge “Supported by the Northern Ontario Academic Medicine Association (NOAMA) AHSC AFP Innovation Fund Award” and are to include the NOAMA logo. The logo is available from the NOAMA office.

7.0 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND PROJECT INFORMATION

- a) Ownership of the Intellectual Property will remain with the Project Lead.
- b) Project information will be made available to all associations with representation on the NOAMA Board to ensure compliance of the AFP.

DO NOT REMOVE THIS VERSION RECORD FROM THIS DOCUMENT

Version	Date	Comments
1.0	2011.06.23	Original
2.0	2012.01.17	
3.0	2014.01.23	
4.0	2016.11.20	
5.0	2018.11.13	
6.0	2019.05.21	
7.0	2020.12.08	
8.0	2021.06.22	
9.0	2023.05.23	Funding increase, Addition of Romeo
10.0	2024.05.21	Addition of co-investigators to 2.1 d) and changing REB approval time from 11 to 8 months
11.0	2024.12.17	Clarity to KT and mid-scale grants
12.0	2025.06.24	Scoring and support to first time applicants
13.0	2025.10.21	Clarified eligible travel expenses