Special Call for Proposals

On 30 January 2020, the WHO declared the recent outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) a “public health emergency of international concern”. This outbreak has impacted every sector of society and resulted in rapid and unprecedented responses and coordination efforts between governments, health care entities, the private sector, not for profit and philanthropic organizations and the public. There is an immediate need for research to gain a better understanding of COVID 19 and its possible future evolution and impact to society, as well as to contain the spread, and improve the public health response and patient care.

Vancouver Island University is extending a special call to faculty from all disciplines who are interested in undertaking research, scholarship and creative activity to better understand, learn from and inform the societal response to COVID 19 and potential future infectious disease outbreaks.

About the call for proposals

Proposals are invited that address the following topics:

- Public health response and social countermeasures:
  - Understanding the social dynamics of transmission and vulnerability.
  - Understanding the role of recreation, leisure and travel in the outbreak and changes caused by public health advisories such as social isolation.
  - Understanding family and community adaptations, attitudes, behavior change and communication.
  - Cultural and historical dimensions of the epidemic such as, examining how individuals and communities understand and react to the disease, including special attention to vulnerable groups.
  - International relations, global coordination, response systems and crisis management.
  - Risk communication, information sharing, and knowledge translation (i.e. traditional and social media).
  - Strategies to combat misinformation, stigma, and fear.
  - Dynamics of response and recovery in remote, island, coastal and indigenous contexts.

- Supporting healthcare system response including infection prevention and control and best practice to protect health care workers.
- Case studies of sectoral impacts, associated responses, measurement of impacts and lessons learned.
- Other research projects related to cooperation across sectors (e.g. education, public transport) to respond and recover from the outbreak.

The proposal should address at least one of the topics mentioned above or clearly specify the link to the COVID 19 outbreak.
All projects must adhere to the VIU set of research guidelines for the COVID 19 response. Projects involving human subjects are strongly encouraged to submit their application for review to the REB early and note that they must adhere to the directives for research involving human subjects during the publicly declared emergency by the Research Ethics Board.

Value of the grant:

- Up to $5000

Who is eligible to apply?

- All VIU Faculty are eligible to apply.

Deadlines and decision dates:

- Proposals must be submitted by April 27, 2020 via ROMEO.
- The Vancouver Island Research Awards Committee (VIURAC) will adjudicate the proposals in early May with the goal to provide decisions by May 15, 2020.

What is the timeframe for project completion?

- The projects selected for funding will have a one year timeframe for completion. Extensions may be granted upon request.

Eligible expenses

1. Wages or compensation for students.
2. Travel costs associated to the research project (once/if travel restrictions and remote work conditions are lifted)
3. Travel costs for knowledge mobilization (up to $1000) once/if travel restrictions are lifted.
4. Costs associated to data collection and analysis.
5. Materials and supplies.
6. Equipment may be eligible if well justified. Any equipment purchased must be made available to other VIU faculty for research projects.

Evaluation criteria

Strength of Project Proposal (50%)

1. Clear articulation of the importance of the research problem and its connection to COVID 19 and the topics outlined in this special call.
2. Potential for the project to aid in understanding, learning from or informing the societal response to COVID 19 and potential future infectious disease outbreaks.
3. Clearly defined research question and description of the activity that will be undertaken.
4. Clear description and appropriateness of the methods or approach to be used.
5. Strategies to mobilize the knowledge to academic and non-academic audiences.
6. Potential for the project to build/enhance the research program and reputation for the proponent, student and VIU.
Implementation (20%)

1. **Adherence to VIU’s COVID response including its set of research guidelines and REB directives.**
2. Likelihood that the proposed objectives will be met within the timeline.
3. Identification of any potential risks that may occur during implementation and strategies that will be used to manage them (where possible) for a successful outcome.
4. Appropriateness of the proposed budget and justification. *Refer to eligible expenses.*

Capability of the Team (20%)

1. Evidence of adequate quality of expertise to implement the proposed plan;
2. Clarity of roles and responsibilities for the team members identified in the workplan.

Engagement of VIU students (10%)

1. VIU students are not required to be involved, however, projects that provide meaningful engagement of at least one VIU student are strongly encouraged to help build capacity in research and creative activity.

Proposal components:

1. Abstract (300 words) ready for sharing publicly on the web if funded.
2. Project description (max 6 pages) that includes:
   a. Topic(s) addressed in the special call
   b. Problem statement and clear research question,
   c. Brief literature review to support the approach,
   d. Methods to be used with a detailed timeline,
   e. Outputs and anticipated outcomes and impacts, and;
   f. Plans to mobilize or commercialize the knowledge or outputs.
3. Budget and justification (max 1 page).
4. Project team, roles and responsibilities.
5. Bibliography or references cited
6. Combine all documents into one PDF and submit using *ROMEO.*