

Written Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Science and Research

Research and Scientific Publication in French

As Canada's federal health research funding agency, the [Canadian Institutes of Health Research](#) (CIHR) would like to thank the committee for embarking on this study and drawing attention to an important subject both for our own organization and for the broader research ecosystem in Canada. CIHR is committed to promoting the inclusion and advancement of groups underrepresented in science as one of the means to enhance excellence in research, training, and knowledge mobilization.

Since 2012, CIHR has led a series of action plans to better fulfill its obligations under the [Official Languages Act](#) and support the development of French language research programs in health. The action plans included measures to support health researchers' equitable access to CIHR programs and services.

CIHR Actions to Support Research and Scientific Publication in French

- All of CIHR's guidance material is published in both official languages, and applicants are invited to communicate with CIHR in the language of their choice.
- In addition to encouraging researchers to submit their funding applications in the official language of their choice, CIHR has increased the application page limit for research proposals submitted in French, based on evidence that documents written in French require approximately 20% more space than those written in English.
- CIHR has increased the availability of translation services for peer reviewers and researchers so that information is available in both official languages at all stages of the research funding process, from application to peer review.
- In April 2018, CIHR implemented a targeted recruitment strategy to expand its pool of experts capable of reviewing applications written in French. CIHR's College of Reviewers systematizes reviewer recruitment to identify and mobilize the appropriate expertise for the review of all funding applications. Ongoing analyses are conducted to ensure that approximately 25% of College of Reviewer members can review applications written in French.
- In 2021, CIHR put in place equalization measures for its Project Grant program, CIHR's largest competition for research grant funding, to ensure that the proportion of French grants funded is at least equal to the proportion of applications submitted in French, in order to address historic disproportions in funded research across both official languages.
 - Project funding data for Spring 2022 shows that equalization had a positive impact on success rates for applications submitted in French, bringing the percentage of funded projects in this category to 20%, in line with the overall success rates of the competition.

- As part of the [Tri-Agency Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan \(2018 – 2025\)](#) along with the other federal funding agencies, we have updated the [Tri-Agency self-identification questionnaire](#) to include a question for applicants to identify which language they first learned, and which language is used most often at home. With this data, CIHR will be able to better monitor the impact of our actions on the proportion of researchers applying in the language of their choice.

These actions are consistent with [CIHR’s policy statement on official languages](#) which, among other things, aims to encourage the appropriate inclusion of official language considerations in health research design, conduct and application to improve health outcomes.

These commitments are also reflected in CIHR’s Strategic Plan 2021-2031, specifically as it relates to [Serving Canadians: Our Commitment to Organizational Excellence](#). CIHR has undertaken a range of interventions to improve equity, diversity and inclusion in the research system, some of which have been aimed at addressing barriers faced by the Francophone research community. CIHR operationalizes these commitments through both investigator-initiated and priority-driven research funding programs across the entire research lifecycle, from application through research and knowledge mobilization.

Challenges and Opportunities

Despite these commitments, CIHR recognizes the frequent use of English for funding applications across the tri-agency funding agencies (CIHR; NSERC and SSHRC).¹ CIHR recognizes that there are ongoing challenges concerning scientific research and publication in French, many that have been highlighted by witness testimony. These include a dearth of French-language journals in the health sciences in Canada; lack of research grant support in French for Francophone researchers within English-speaking institutions; collaborative research teams that may operate in English; and overall lack of trust from researchers that their applications will be considered equally, if submitted in French.

CIHR will continue to take action to address systemic barriers within the health research ecosystem. Specifically, CIHR will continue to monitor research funding data to ensure equity in health research funding for French-speaking researchers; work with key stakeholders, such as universities and community organizations, to identify areas for improvement; and implement actions to further support health research in both official languages in Canada.

¹ ACFAS Summary Report, June 2021: [Portrait and Challenges of Research in French in the Minority Context in Canada](#)