

CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR MHRC-ATLAS INSTITUTE RESEARCH AWARD

Loneliness and social isolation have been recognized in the literature as being associated with adverse mental and physical health outcomes and premature death^{1,2}. Although the experience of loneliness and social isolation can be experienced by anyone, members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) who are transitioning to civilian life present a unique experience, requiring specific attention³.

The Atlas Institute aims to improve the wellbeing of Veterans and their Families, as such further upstream investigation is needed to better understand how to reduce the risk of experiencing loneliness and social isolation, and their potential adverse outcomes.

Mental Health Research Canada (MHRC) is a national charitable organization dedicated to advancing mental health knowledge in a unique but important way: we ensure the fulsome engagement of people with lived experience throughout the research process.

This research funding opportunity will support an 18-month project that aims to understand and address the experiences of loneliness and social isolation of both current members of the Canadian Armed Forces who are about to transition into civilian life as well as CAF Veterans. Research projects may focus on the experience of loneliness and social isolation of CAF members and Veterans as well as investigating protective factors and/or supporting programs/services.

¹ Holt-Lunstad J., et al., Loneliness and social isolation as risk factors for mortality: a meta-analytic review. *Perspectives on psychological science*, 2015. 10(2): p. 227–237. doi: 10.1177/1745691614568352

² Steptoe A., et al., Social isolation, loneliness, and all-cause mortality in older men and women. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 2013. 110(15): p. 5797–5801

³ Wilson G., Hill M., and Kiernan M.D., Loneliness and social isolation of military veterans: systematic narrative review. *Occupational medicine*, 2018. 68(9): p. 600–609. doi: 10.1093/occmed/kqy160

THE RESEARCH CHALLENGE

Loneliness and social isolation in Canadian armed forces members and veterans

FUNDING PRINCIPLES

Collaboratively, our organizations are dedicated to investing in research that is:

- **Innovative with high potential for impact;**
- **Important to people with lived experience, and relevant to their needs; and**
- **Ethical and trustworthy.**

We are committed to proactively supporting the effective use and application of knowledge. This means that we:

- Support projects that focus on stakeholder/end-user needs;
- Build connections between stakeholders and researchers, and between research and practice; and
- Emphasize the scalability of projects and opportunities for the greatest impact.

Please note that proposals submitted are collaboratively evaluated via an Assessment Advisory Team comprised of people with lived experience (CAF members, veterans and families), knowledge users, subject matter experts, academics and community leaders in three basic categories:

- a) Relevance/Need;
- b) Merit of proposed solution AND Methodology; and
- c) Potential for Impact.

More details on these categories and the specific **Evaluation Criteria** used for this research award are provided on **page 4**. The proposed work must resonate with people with lived experiences and family members and integrate the input of people with lived experience throughout all stages of the project.

VALUE OF THE RESEARCH AWARD

Selected proposals will be eligible for funding valued at up to \$138,000.

RESEARCH AWARD TERM

The term of the research award is 18 months.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for this research award, the principal applicant(s) leading the project must be who are landed immigrants or Canadian citizens and who are supported by a **team**.

The **principal applicant** must be:

- an independent researcher affiliated with a Canadian post-secondary institution (college or university) whose appointment continues until the conclusion of the funding period **OR**
- an individual affiliated with an Indigenous non-governmental organization in Canada with a research or knowledge mobilization mandate **OR**
- an individual affiliated with a veteran/veteran family non-governmental organization in Canada with a research or knowledge mobilization mandate.

In addition to the principal applicant, people with lived and living experience (CAF members, veterans and families) **MUST** be in the research team.

You can also choose to involve other health care providers, community organizations, additional researchers and possibly entrepreneurs to enhance the depth and scope of your team and support your proposed activities.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

The following resources may be useful in preparing your proposal:

Ethics, respect & inclusivity:

Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans

https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique_tcps2-eptc2_2018.html

Equity, diversity & inclusion resources:

<https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/52553.html>

Engagement of CAF members, veterans and family:

[Engaging with veterans and families - Creating a new approach \(atlasveterans.ca\)](https://atlasveterans.ca)

APPLICATION PROCESS

Visit the website of Mental Health Research Canada (<https://www.mhrc.ca/mhrc-atlasintitute-research-award>) to apply via MHRC's Submittable portal and fill out the application form. Provide supporting documents, if applicable.

EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR PROPOSAL

The following describes the components of the proposed work that will be assessed during the review process. Please note that the application submission format aligns with the following evaluation criteria:

A. RELEVANCE/NEED (20%) *		
1. Demonstrated need/ case for action	<p>The proposal demonstrates evidence-based need/case for action in local context, this may include how your proposal aligns with the priorities of the Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families and MHRC.</p> <p>It must include a high-level overview of work that has already been done in the sector, and how the current project will complement (and not duplicate) work that is already underway.</p>	10%
2. Letters of support from the community	<p>The proposal includes up to 3 letters of support from members of the community, (and their contact information) who will directly benefit from the proposal/project.</p> <p>At least one of the letters should come from a person with direct lived experience relevant to the proposal.</p>	10%

B. MERIT OF PROPOSED SOLUTION & METHODOLOGY (50%)		
3. Approach – clarity, rationale, evidence-based	<p>The research question(s) and proposed approach are clear and based on a sound rationale. Proposed activities are well-suited to addressing the stated challenge/need. The proposed solution/approach is informed by evidence.</p>	5%
4. Engagement of people with lived experience	<p>The proposal demonstrates a commitment to and plans for meaningful and appropriate engagement of those with lived experience, in this case, Canadian Armed Forces members, Veterans and/or family members from relevant communities <u>on the research team and throughout all stages</u> of the proposal development and project implementation.</p>	10%
5. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion	<p>Given the diversity of the populations in Canada, the proposal must consider equity, diversity and inclusion (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status and disability) in their research design, as appropriate.</p>	5%
6. Innovation, originality	<p>The initiative is grounded in/informed by evidence but stretches the boundaries of the status quo (existing knowledge or practice), using novel (promising) concepts, approaches, tools or intervention.</p>	10%

<p>7. Workplan & Research design</p>	<p>The project workplan is reasonable and feasible given proposed objectives, timelines and budget. The workplan includes activities, deliverables, roles of project team member and timelines for implementation.</p> <p>The proposal includes reasonable preliminary plans for both process and outcome evaluation.</p>	<p>5%</p>
<p>8. Collaboration</p>	<p>The proposal demonstrates well-thought-out plans for collaborating with various stakeholders, organizations, or individuals within the community or service area. This could include other nonprofit organizations, government agencies, educational institutions or community leaders.</p>	<p>5%</p>
<p>10. Budget</p>	<p>A budget has been submitted <u>using the given template (See Appendix A1, page 8)</u>. (Note: administration, technology and core staff salaries/benefits/pension will not be funded).</p> <p>Your budget must also include a proposed fund-disbursement schedule (<u>Appendix A2, page 9</u>) based on project milestones (we recommend an amount payable on signing of contract, followed by a progress milestone and a 10% hold-back of the research award total until receipt of the final report).</p>	<p>5%</p>
<p>11. Ethical standards</p>	<p>The team must follow ethical standards and procedures for research at all stages of the proposal and its implementation.</p>	<p>5%</p>

<p>C. POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT (30%) *</p>		
<p>12. Transformative potential</p>	<p>The proposal demonstrates that the initiative has potential to advance the mental health research of Canadian Armed Forces members, veterans and families.</p> <p>Preference will be given to proposals with potential for scaling within the province/territory of origin and within Canada.</p>	<p>15%</p>
<p>13. Knowledge mobilization plans</p>	<p>The proposal demonstrates short-term and long-term plans to mobilize knowledge generated through this work, including a dissemination strategy to inform the broader community of research relevance and findings.</p>	<p>15%</p>

***In order to be considered for funding, proposals must score an average of at least 70% in both subcategories A (Relevance and Need) and C (Potential for Impact), as well as a minimum of a 70% score overall.**

REPORT-BACK MECHANISM FOR WINNING PROJECT TEAMS

There will be multiple check-ins at various points with MHRC and the Atlas Institute, as well as a requirement to report back on the evaluation findings and key outcomes.

MHRC and the Atlas Institute will provide guidance and support as needed to ensure the success of each project.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

All rights to any inventions and/or research reside solely with the applicants. Neither MHRC nor the Atlas Institute possess ownership of, or equity in the winning submissions; however, applicants will engage with both organizations to ensure mobilization of relevant knowledge that emerges from successful projects.

The co-principal applicants agree to license their Intellectual Property (IP) in order to grant MHRC and the Atlas Institute to create derivative works. The derivative works created by MHRC and the Atlas Institute, together with any associated IP rights therein, shall be the sole and exclusive property of MHRC and the Atlas Institute. For clarity, MHRC and the Atlas Institute agrees to provide credit to the co-principal applicants, as the case may be, in any derivative works created by MHRC and the Atlas Institute based on the work product.

MHRC & THE ATLAS INSTITUTE'S RIGHT TO A SECOND CALL

MHRC and the Atlas Institute reserve the right to put forth a second call for proposals if the submissions received do not fulfill the criteria of the research award

ABOUT THE RESEARCH AWARD FUNDING ORGANIZATIONS

Mental Health Research Canada (MHRC):

Mental Health Research Canada (MHRC) is a national charity that serves to advance mental health through studentships, granting, data collection/analysis and strategic initiatives. As the leading mental health organization in Canada, we are dedicated to improving the lives of all Canadians by advancing mental health knowledge in a unique, but important way: we ensure the fulsome engagement of people with lived experience throughout the entire research process. One of our projects is funded by Health Canada to monitor and report on the mental health of Canadians. This important work started during COVID-19 and will continue through 2025. We collect population data, analyze and report on it to governments and stakeholders nationally to support data informed decision making. Mental Health systems and services cannot improve without research – research is an investment in the future.

The Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families (Atlas Institute):

The Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families works with Veterans, Families, service providers and researchers to bridge the divide between research and practice so Veterans and their Families can get the best possible mental health care and supports. The Atlas Institute was originally established as the Centre of Excellence on PTSD and Related Mental Health Conditions, through the Minister of Veterans Affairs November 2015 mandate letter, with funding and budget announced in the March 2017 federal budget.

APPENDIX A1: BUDGET TEMPLATE

Please detail all costs for this project as per the categories below - to add a line, insert an extra row in the relevant category. An editable version of this template is available on the MHRC website.

Note that administration, technology and core staff salaries/benefits/pension will not be funded are ineligible for funding.

BUDGET FOR PROJECT: [INSERT TITLE]		
A. Project Staffing and Compensation	Amount Requested	Amount from other sources
TOTAL Employment and Compensation	\$	\$
B. Goods and Services	Amount Requested	Amount from other sources
TOTAL Goods and Services	\$	\$
C. Gifts, Honoraria and Incentives	Amount Requested	Amount from other sources
Participants with lived/living experience		
TOTAL Gifts, Honoraria and Incentives	\$	\$
D. Other (specify)	Amount Requested	Amount from other sources
TOTAL Other	\$	\$
TOTAL FOR THIS PROJECT	\$	\$

APPENDIX A2: PROPOSED PROJECT TIMELINE & FUND DISBURSEMENT SCHEDULE

Project Milestone*	Anticipated Date of Completion:	Requested Payout Amount:
Signing of Contract	Early January 2024 or before	\$
Progress Milestone: [INSERT DETAILS]		\$
Final Report Submission (10% of total requested, as per guidelines)		\$