



WORKING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

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## FOCUS ON TOMORROW

# “INNOVATION AT WORK” REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS 2008

**Deadline: September 15, 2008**

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*In Partnership with ...*



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**Issued: July 3, 2008**

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# INNOVATION AT WORK

## Request for Proposals 2008

*WorkSafeBC is pleased to issue a second Request for Proposals this year for INNOVATION AT WORK grants. A limited amount of funds are available for this competition.*

### I. Introduction

WorkSafeBC is dedicated to the vision of workers and workplaces safe and secure from injury, illness and disease. In order to achieve this goal, WorkSafeBC, together with its partners, must encourage and support the development and use of the best scientific evidence on issues that workers, employers and the organizations themselves face in seeking to prevent injury and illness, to return injured workers to health and to work, and to provide fair compensation.

To this end, WorkSafeBC offers research grants under its program FOCUS ON TOMORROW. Under its category INNOVATION AT WORK, for which this RFP is specifically issued, grants are made available to a broad group of applicants (including professional researchers, workplace parties, unions, employer organizations, and educators) and are intended to support the development of new knowledge and/or practical problem-solving at the workplace level.

Further details on the eligibility criteria, research priorities, and terms and conditions of funding are contained in this RFP. Application forms and guidelines are available on WorkSafeBC's website.

From its inception in 2006, WorkSafeBC has funded 25 INNOVATION AT WORK projects spanning a broad range of novel topics and ideas – each of which aim to develop and/or enhance workplace health and safety using practical approaches among workplaces and workplace participants. Some of these projects are also funded through partnership agreements with other Workers' Compensation Boards and Commissions.

### **Partnering with Other Workers' Compensation Boards**

WorkSafeBC is pleased to announce a new partner in support of the research program – Alberta Employment and Immigration. This is in addition to our continuing partnerships with the Workers' Compensation Board of Manitoba, the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board, the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia. These partnerships provide a cost effective means of leveraging limited research funds in pursuit of common priorities. For more information on partnering with WorkSafeBC, please contact the Research Secretariat.

### **Research Needs and Relevance**

The Board of Directors of WorkSafeBC wants to ensure that research funded through the research program addresses real needs of the organization and its partners, and of employers and workers in workplaces. The Board of Directors wants to ensure that the

research provides tangible, even quantifiable benefits where possible, by helping to identify potential solutions to real problems. In order to help researchers focus on these issues, the following questions are included in the application forms:

- What is the problem to be solved and how will the research attempt to solve the problem?
- How will the research be done?
- Why is the research important and how does the research support WorkSafeBC and/or its partners mandate?
- How will we know if the research has been successful in solving the problem?

The Research Secretariat will facilitate access to WorkSafeBC's policymakers for researchers who wish to discuss potential projects.

### **High Risk Accident Types**

The Board of Directors is also giving priority to projects that target reduction of frequency of accident types that result in large numbers of serious injuries for workers in B.C. These are:

- Fall to lower level
- Struck by object
- Fall on same level
- Caught or compressed by equipment or object
- Struck against object

As such, we are inviting proposals for projects that have the potential to significantly reduce the incidence of such injuries. Research topics may address specific industries, occupations, technology, equipment and/or material, work processes, management systems, culture, and/or human factors that influence, or are hypothesized to influence, these traumatic injuries.

The Research Secretariat can provide researchers with some statistics on the number of these claims types by costs, which are further broken down by industry sectors.

### **Knowledge Transfer and Exchange**

As knowledge transfer and exchange is a fundamental component of successful research, we encourage applicants to include potential end users in the design and execution of each research project. We also require researchers to develop plans and approaches for dissemination of research findings.

## II. INNOVATION AT WORK

INNOVATION AT WORK supports the development of practical, shop-floor solutions that translate new knowledge into practice, or that solve specific problems in workplaces. It is also designed to support development and evaluation of educational projects that will benefit workers and employers by assisting employers to ensure safety and health protection of workers in B.C. and/or in the partners' jurisdictions. Projects may include development of best practices applicable to specific work related activities.

INNOVATION AT WORK is intended to provide funding for small-scale projects that will promote increased interaction among workplace parties, organizations, and/or researchers. Using collective resources of those who are most affected by its policies and programs will assist WorkSafeBC and employers in ensuring that critical areas of need are addressed and practical solutions are found and implemented. The maximum grant for these projects is normally \$50,000, for a maximum duration of one year.

WorkSafeBC will strongly favour those projects with the highest potential for practical or applied usage, and that have a high degree of relevance for B.C. workplaces and/or our partners' workplaces. Projects that have broad applicability or that are of specific interest to our partners are those most likely to be funded through our partnerships with other jurisdictions. Applicants are encouraged to contact our partners directly when considering projects that may be of specific interest to them. Contact information is available at the end of this document.

### Who is eligible for INNOVATION AT WORK grants?

Anyone who is a Canadian resident may apply for an INNOVATION AT WORK grant. The experience and capability of the project team will be a primary consideration. Involving the experiences and expertise of people in the workplace and the research/training community will also be an important consideration. We also encourage collaboration among workplace parties, researchers, and educators and prefer projects which involve workplace parties to the greatest extent possible. Full-time employees of WorkSafeBC are not eligible to be a Principal Applicant. However, WorkSafeBC researchers may participate as Co-applicants in research proposals submitted to the Research Secretariat.

## III. Research Priorities

Generally, WorkSafeBC and its partners will consider projects that fall within their mandate of occupational injury and disease prevention, successful rehabilitation and return-to-work, and fair compensation. WorkSafeBC's Board of Directors will give priority to proposals that support one or more of the organization's key strategic initiatives and that have a clear potential to positively impact health and safety in B.C. workplaces or the workers' compensation system.

Within the general priorities as discussed above, the Board of Directors has identified a list of specific issues of concern for 2008. The list includes the priority items from 2007, but is expanded to include high risk accident types, compensation/rehabilitation issues relating to the assessment of prosthetic devices, the rights of seasonal agricultural workers under the *Workers Compensation Act*, and claim and injury information on workers of marginal populations.

## 2008 Research Priorities

### Reducing the frequency of accident types that result in large numbers of serious injuries

- Fall to lower level
- Struck by object
- Fall on same level
- Caught or compressed by equipment or object
- Struck against object

### Societal Change in Occupational Health and Safety

- Influencing general attitudes to workplace safety
- Changing high risk behaviours

### Emerging Occupational Diseases

- Infectious diseases
- Work-relatedness of neurological diseases

### Compensation/Rehabilitation Issues

- Evidence-based treatment or management of chronic pain (including cognitive behavioral therapy)
- Assessment of whether the current approach to compensation adequately reflects the impact of chronic pain on workers' earning capacity
- Employability assessments – six-month follow-up to determine the outcome for workers
- The impact of disability management companies on claims and return to work
- To what extent are work-related injuries, diseases and deaths under-reported?
  - Why do people with asbestos-related illness not file claims?
  - To what extent are work-related fatalities, as recorded by hospitals and vital statistics, reflected in WorkSafeBC data?
  - Are work-related injury rates among ethnic minorities in B.C. proportional to their representation in the workforce?
- What impact does the survival of a serious (non-permanent disability) work-related injury have on subsequent claims experience?
- Assessment of prosthetic devices – comparative functional outcomes
- Are seasonal agricultural workers aware of and acting on their rights under the *Workers Compensation Act* and corresponding regulations?
- Worker population profiles - claim and injury comparisons
  - Do injury and claim rates among workers with temporary work visas in B.C. compare differently with the general population of workers in B.C.?
  - Are there differences in the population of those whose claims are initially denied from the population of those whose claims are initially accepted?

## Prevention Issues

- Implications of key shifts in the economy (e.g. changing employment relationships) for the workers' compensation system in B.C.
- Measurement of safety culture/climate or other leading indicators of safety at the firm, sector, or economy-wide level
- Evaluation of prevention initiatives at the sector or economy-wide level
- Joint Health and Safety Committees – compliance and effectiveness
- Do workers with first-aid certificates have fewer work-related injuries?
- Substance abuse and its impact on safety – the effectiveness (or not) of mandatory testing

In addition to the above priority items, the Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia has identified the following areas of interest:

- Impact of worker health and safety centres
- Environmental scan of national occupational health and safety education curriculum
- Cross-industry study of effective leading indicators, or strategies, for prevention
- Impact of ergonomic-type injuries on the Nova Scotia healthcare system
- Significance of fatigue to workplace injury and times (during a work period) that injuries occur
- Effectiveness of incentive and disincentive initiatives (including provincial Certificates of Recognition)

Alberta Employment and Immigration has also identified the following areas of interest:

- Occupational cancers – causation, number of actual incidences of work-related cancers versus number of incidences claimed/paid through workers' compensation
- Motor vehicle fatalities – investigations, causes, incidences
- Health and safety in the retail sector
- Best practices in health and safety in the public sector
- Occupational disease tracking systems – identifying exposures, collection of accurate incidence data

Applicants are encouraged to contact our partners directly when considering projects that may be of specific interest to them. Contact information is available at the end of this document.

## IV. How to Apply

### Notice of Intent

Prospective applicants should first submit (by e-mail) a notice of their intention to apply for funding by **4 pm, August 18, 2008**. The notice of intent should include:

- the title of the research and a one-paragraph summary of the proposed research
- the name, address and telephone number of the Principal Applicant, and
- the identities of other key personnel and participating institutions

Although the notice of intent is not binding and will not be used in the review of the application, the Research Secretariat will use the information it contains to estimate workload and to identify potential reviewers.

## **Application Procedures**

All forms and application materials are available for download from WorkSafeBC's website. When completing the application form, applicants should review the guidelines for completing specific sections. The proposals must address all criteria as described below under "Evaluation Process and Criteria for Peer Review".

## **Allowable Costs**

Applicants must provide a detailed budget, with accompanying justification for all operating expenses. The budget must be consistent with the stated objectives and planned activities for the project. Applicants should consult the application guidelines as well as the *Guidelines for Allowable Travel Expenses* for a listing and description of allowable costs and activities.

## **Applicant Consent Form for Use and Disclosure of Personal Information**

A signed form must be attached to the application form for each project team member whose personal information is included in the application.

## **Ethics and Protection of Privacy**

In the conduct of its work, the Research Secretariat subscribes to and acknowledges its obligations under applicable legislation regarding research involving humans and privacy protection. As such, all proposals involving human participants must submit an ethics review certificate from their institution to the Research Secretariat before funds will be released. Those who are not certain about how to obtain an ethics certificate may contact the Research Secretariat. In addition, applicants must provide a detailed security plan to ensure that there are reasonable administrative, technical and physical safeguards to prevent unauthorized use or disclosure of records.

## **Award Criteria**

The Research Secretariat awards research funds on a competitive basis. All applications submitted in response to this RFP will compete for available funds with all other applications. The following will be considered in making funding recommendations:

- quality of the proposed project as determined by peer review,
- relevance of the project to WorkSafeBC and/or our partners' workplaces, and
- availability of funds

## **Evaluation Process and Criteria for Peer Review**

Research proposals submitted to the Research Secretariat are evaluated in a three-stage process. This process is designed to be scientifically/methodologically credible, and transparent and accountable, while emphasizing relevance to B.C. and/or the partners' workplaces and the workers' compensation system:

Stage 1 – preliminary review by the Research Secretariat

Stage 2 – peer review by experts

Stage 3 – relevance review by a cross-divisional committee of WorkSafeBC staff and an external advisory committee

Upon receipt, the Research Secretariat will review all applications for completeness and for compliance with the parameters of this competition. Proposals that are not complete, do not provide adequate information in the required sections, exceed length limitations or are otherwise in a form that is unacceptable for peer review, will be returned to the applicant without further consideration.

Applications that are complete and that comply with this RFP will then be evaluated by peer reviewers. Peer reviewers are asked to evaluate the project based on the following criteria:

- Originality, innovation, practicality (25%)
- Importance (25%)
- Methodology (30%)
- Team knowledge, expertise and experience (20%)

Applications that pass peer review are finally screened for relevance by a cross-divisional committee of WorkSafeBC staff and by an external advisory committee that includes worker and employer stakeholders. Staff of the partner jurisdictions will participate in the screening of proposals for studies on the topics of their respective interests.

### **Funding Decisions and Notification of Applicants**

On completion of the review process, the Research Secretariat will receive the ranking lists, merit scores (ratings) and recommendations for the applications submitted. The Research Secretariat will then present the recommendations to the Board of Directors. Final authority for approving WorkSafeBC funding rests with the Board of Directors

The Research Secretariat will notify the successful applicants and then the names of the individual researchers and research team members will be posted on WorkSafeBC's website.

### **General Terms and Conditions of Funding**

All standard terms and conditions, as specified on WorkSafeBC's website, shall apply to those projects funded through INNOVATION AT WORK. General terms and conditions of funding cover such areas as:

- Applicant and Institutional Responsibilities
- Ethics
- Official Language Policy
- Access to Information and Privacy Acts
- Acknowledgement of WorkSafeBC and/or our partners' support, etc.

Successful recipients will be informed of any special conditions when they receive their notification of funding. The Principal Applicant (with funding responsibilities) will be required to submit a financial report describing how the grant funds were used at the end of the term of the grant.

## Deadline for the Submission of Application Materials

Applications must be received by **4pm, September 15, 2008**.

If an application is received after the due date, it will be returned without review. The only materials that will be accepted after the deadline are certificates (e.g., human ethics approvals).

Packages should be delivered to the Research Secretariat of WorkSafeBC, Level 2 Main Building, 6951 Westminster Highway, Richmond, BC V7C 1C6.

### Contact for Further Information:

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