

CALLS FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH PROPOSALS 2024-2025

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Deadline for Submission: March 31, 2024

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REQUEST FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH PROPOSALS

Overview	
Value	As determined by researcher
Duration	1 year ending June 30, 2025
Applications deadlines(s)*	12:00 pm (EST) April 1, 2024
Results announced*	June 1, 2024
Apply	Minimum \$2500; Maximum \$25,000

*Note: If the deadline falls on a weekend or an Ontario public holiday, the online application system will remain open until 5 p.m. on the next business day.

1. INTRODUCTION

Because of the unique structure of Ontario's nursing profession and the RPN/RN model, and standardized approaches to education, implementation, and use of the role of registered practical nurse, provincially, nationally and/or globally do not exist, nursing research cannot easily or perhaps credibly be applied between national and international jurisdictions. As a result, the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario (WeRPN) offers research funding to encourage and support all levels of RPN research through an annual research budget.

Eligible researchers include those from Ontario post-secondary research institutions (colleges or universities) and/or independent researchers. These funds are intended to generate high quality academic research co-designed with Registered Practical Nurses (RPNs) and RPNs as participants. Optional other parties, e.g., governmental and/or industry partners could also be included.

The research projects must align with WeRPN's strategic plan and enhance the representation of evidence in the literature regarding the utilization of RPNs, optimization of the RPN roles, and demonstration of the impact and value of RPN interventions on processes and client outcomes across sectors in our health system.

Through its own merit review process, WeRPN determines the number of research funding competitions for small-moderate scale research and research-related activities about the research priorities for Registered Practical Nurses, establishes the deadlines for competitions, and sets application procedures.

2. WeRPN

What is an Ontario Registered Practical Nurse?

Registered Practical Nurses (RPN) are:

- ❖ regulated nurses with the College of Nurses of Ontario,
- ❖ minimally, hold a diploma in practical nursing from an accredited Canadian college,
- ❖ professional who combine knowledge, skills, and judgement to provide compassionate, informed, and expert, technical, medical, and virtuous nursing care,
- ❖ mostly employed to provide direct care to clients, residents, and families on a daily basis, and
- ❖ in even greater demand for their service and skills as Ontario's demographics shift.

Today, more than 60,000 RPNs (<https://www.cno.org>) are registered with the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) and support patients, clients and residents in hospitals, primary care practices, public health units, community care agencies, long-term care facilities, retirement homes and schools.

About WeRPN (www.werpn.com)

The Registered Practical Nurses of Ontario (WeRPN), formerly RPNAO, was founded in 1958, and is the professional association representing the voice of RPNs in Ontario with over 14,500 voluntary members.

Mission

WeRPN's mission is to break the walls down, build the person up, and bring the people together to improve client care. WeRPN realizes this mission via four strategic drivers: advancing expertise, driving evidence, advocacy and influence-building, and innovative growth.

Vision

WeRPN's vision is to support improved health outcomes and deliver the best possible care to patients, residents, and clients.

Values

- ❖ Proud Professional- We are smart and knowledgeable. We hold ourselves to rigorous and rising standards. We take pride in ongoing learning and sharing our learning experiences with counterparts at home and around the world.
- ❖ Leading the Way Together - We believe there is tremendous opportunity to deliver even greater client care more effectively. Achieving this requires challenging norms – including the myth that anyone within the health system is more “important” than others. So even though we stand for our members, our brand is committed to providing excellent client care in collaboration with our fellow health professionals.
- ❖ Giving RPNs a voice - We champion the critical role of RPNs by unifying our members, listening carefully to their needs, advocating on their behalf, and telling personal nursing stories in a way that ensures they are heard.
- ❖ Focused on the Greater Good - Everything we do is for the good of the client, the health system, and the nursing profession at large. Client care always comes first.

WeRPN Strategic Plan and Drivers of Impact

WeRPN's current activities are directed by the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan. Please access the strategic plan and annual report 2021-2022 by clicking [here](#). Please note that the WeRPN strategic plan will be re-developed with a release date in June 2024.

3. RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Through a Provincial Innovation Tour (2017), a Research Think Tank (2018) and a focus group at the National Nursing Leaders Conference (2019), WeRPN identified the need for research in the areas of professional development (leadership, research, wellness, clinical practice), role awareness (role clarity, nursing profession equality, interprofessional team collaboration, role optimization), promotion and advocacy (value-add awareness, advocacy) and

innovation (delivery of care, specialization) for sponsored research projects from scientists/ academicians/ professionals/ administrators from innovative institutions. Our first “Call for Academic Research Proposals” in 2021-2022, resulted in four funded projects across the sectors of home and community care, long term care, rehabilitative care and acute care academic teaching. In the second year, 2022-2023, we funded two projects across the acute care and long-term care sectors. For year 3, 2023-2024, we funded four projects.

Our priorities for the 2024-2025 call for academic research proposals are these four priority areas:

1. **Value/impact of the optimized RPN roles.** This priority has direct alignment with WeRPN’s strategic drivers of advancing expertise, advocacy and influence and driving evidence. Projects should study the variety of roles and range of activities performed by RPNs and what are the required competencies linked to these roles and activities? How do these roles and competencies compare, contrast, and complement other health care providers? How do the patient outcomes compare and differ from other roles? What is the impact of an RPN role on the patients and clients? What is the public awareness and understanding of nursing knowledge and clinical skills requirements? What images do RPNs project? What are the institutional restrictions or barriers for RPNs? What are the RPN competencies required of administrative/leadership, college teacher/instructor, ProfessionalPractice Lead, and/or Director of Care roles?

2. **Delivery of care.** This priority has direct alignment to advancing expertise and driving evidence. Offering progressive models of care advances RPN expertise and provides evidence to support policy and practice changes. Projects should reflect investigation of what new models of care can improve patient outcomes and system performance using optimization of the RPN roles? How are decision made on whether RPNs are the most appropriate provider for safe patient care? Are RPNs able to use their knowledge, skills, and judgment to the greatest extent possible? How do RPNs organize their care for patient assignment, bedside care? What specific cognitive knowledge do RPNs use for the knowledge process model -assessment, treatment planning and treatment delivery?

What are the models of care and staffing mix combinations? Does a holistic model create more continuity and better outcomes? How do RPNs interact with less skilled workers at the bedside?

3. **Excellence in practice and leading change for better patient outcomes.** This priority directly aligns with the strategic drivers of advancing expertise and driving evidence. How are RPNs influencing policy and practice at various levels of the health system? What global initiatives are shaped by the work of RPNs? How are RPNs engaging in provincial, national, and international strategies? What are the knowledge gaps in the literature about RPNs? What are barriers and facilitators to improving work conditions and cross-disciplinary relationships for RPNs? What are the barriers and challenges for RPNs engagement in political action initiatives?

4. **Health Human resource and workforce planning.** This priority directly aligns with advocacy and influence, advancing expertise, and driving evidence. Building, maintaining, and planning workforce needs are required because of current workforce challenges: health care staffing shortages, aging and gendered workforce; retention and recruitment issues for nursing industry and by sectors; working conditions (e.g., mandatory overtime); nurse to patient ratio.

Evidence in current workforce demographics and population needs linked to educational planning and health system workforce needs drives policy, (e.g., career laddering, micro-credentialling) to mitigate workplace challenges and optimize costly yet valuable human resources.

4. GUIDELINES

1. GENERAL:

- a. This program of sponsored research projects can be conducted simultaneously or sequentially on themes of critical significance and priority for WeRPN in Ontario, Canada.
- b. WeRPN expects that the research will develop new understanding and insight on RPN-related issues which will become benchmark in terms of concept, theory, methodology and research outcomes.
- c. Research studies will be commissioned by WeRPN from identified experts, research institutions and practicing clinicians in a desired theme of study.
- d. Institutions, individual scholars, or group of scholars, interested in conducting research related to WeRPN's key priorities and have necessary facilities, resources and expertise, may submit a proposal thereon to WeRPN.
- e. The extent and scope of these studies can be smaller case studies, exploratory action research studies or extensive studies employing one or multiple methods with larger financial outlays.
- f. Given the breadth of the call for proposals and the nature of research expected under the sponsored program ranging from case studies to small pilot projects to moderate sized endeavours, WeRPN expects that the research could be interprofessional in character with researchers from different disciplines constituting a team, e.g., economic impact analysis. RPN involvement should be prominent on the research teams, e.g., conceptualization, initiation, planning, design, implementation (data collection), analysis, publication and knowledge mobilization.

5. FUNDS AVAILABLE

The funding is provided by WeRPN. Annually, the maximum funding per grant is variable. For this call, the 2024-2025 funding is \$100,000 (up to a maximum of \$25,000 per grant). Individual grant awards are dependent on the specifics of the proposal, the number of proposals received, and the number of proposals recommended for funding. Subsequent opportunities for applications may be issued. Matching or exceeding cash or in-kind contributions from partnership organizations are strongly encouraged.

6. REVIEW PROCESS AND ADJUDICATION

Applications are adjudicated and available funds are awarded through a merit review process of the WeRPN Research Advisory Council. Each grant will be evaluated by a minimum of three (3) evaluators. Applicants will be offered an optional opportunity to identify any evaluators that they wish to be excluded. Please note that evaluators with current affiliation with the Principal Investigator will recuse themselves from assessing a proposal. WeRPN leadership bases grant approval decisions on the recommendation of the evaluators and on the funds available. Funding decisions are guided by the principle of minimum essential funding. Recommendations are based

on the evaluation criteria below. Feedback will be provided upon notification of whether grant was awarded or declined.

7. EVALUATION CRITERIA

- a) To be included in the evaluation, the proposal must be adjudicated to align with WeRPN Research Strategic plan priorities. If no alignment is perceived, the proposal will be rejected. The WeRPN Research strategic plan can be found at this link.

https://www.werpn.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/6094_WeRPN_Strat-Plan_FINAL.pdf

- b) Research Challenge – The aim and importance of the endeavour (60%):

- The research's **relevance** to needs, challenges, priorities and opportunities facing, WeRPN, RPNs and partner organization (if applicable)
 - **Originality, significant and expected contribution** to knowledge
 - Appropriateness of the literature review, **methods, rigour and theoretical** approach
 - **Potential for the project to have influence and impact** with governmental, regulatory, industry and partner organization and beyond.
 - **Research Questions** or Hypothesis: The research questions to be answered/ addressed are unequivocally stated.
 - **Implications:** The proposal states whether this research would bring forth any implications locally, nationally, or internationally, any methodological innovations or contribute to theorybuilding.
- c) Feasibility – The plan to achieve excellence (20%)
- **Duration** of the Project: The timelines for the project activities are detailed sufficiently, appear feasible and do not exceed one year. It should indicate the time needed for various tasks such as ethics approval, preparation of schedules, pilot study (if any), data collection, data analysis, report writing etc.
 - **Budget:** The budget indicates the number, type and cost of personnel, travel, data processing, supplies, printing, books, journals, equipment, contingency, and any other items with justification. Indications of other planned resources, including leveraging **cash and in-kind support** from host institution and/or from partner organization.
 - **Quality and appropriateness of knowledge mobilization plans**, including effective dissemination, exchange and engagement with the partner organization and other stakeholders within and/or beyond the research community. Includes a manuscript prepared for peer review publication. Successful applicants will be encouraged to enable other researchers and stakeholders to access and re-use or text-mine the data suggesting an Open Access approach.
 - **Involvement of team**, including RPNs and patients, clients, residents and/or families/caregivers in the conception and initiation, planning, design and conduct of the research and/or related activities is evident. The RPN involvement should be a prominent member on the research team, e.g., project design and planning,

project execution, data collection, analysis, performance/monitoring, publication and knowledge mobilization, and project close design. Projects that use RPNs as advisors only would receive lower scoring.

- d) **Capability** – The expertise to succeed (20%)
- **Evidence of other knowledge mobilization activities** (e.g., films, performances, commissioned reports, presentations, knowledge synthesis, experience in collaboration/other interactions with stakeholders, contribution to public debate and the media) and of impacts on professional practice, social service, policies, etc. All knowledge mobilization and other activities must acknowledge the contribution of WeRPN funding and support of the project.
- **Evidence of past contributions to training and mentoring of students**, RPNs, postdoctoral researchers, and highly qualified personnel
- **Quality, quantity, and significance of past experience** and published and/or creative outputs of the applicant and any co-applicants relative to their roles in the partnership and to the stage of their career

8. ELIGIBILITY FOR AWARD

- a) Priority will be given to proposals forwarded by organizations/ institutions with a **strong history of RPN research** and quality improvement.
- b) Eligible researchers include those from Ontario post-secondary research institutions – colleges or universities and/or independent researchers, e.g., not affiliated with a college or university, who believe a proposed project meets all or most of research components, e.g., data integrity, research ethics board approval, peer-reviewed publication, and is commensurate with the size of grant, e.g., small pilot study, case study.
- c) If the open competition proposals fail to sufficiently meet the criteria above, WeRPN reserves the right to ask for specific research proposals to seek out studies focused on priority areas. For such purposes, applications may be sought from scientists/ academicians/ professionals/ administrators. In such cases, the prescribed application form will be submitted to WeRPN.

Applying teams will need to minimally consist of:

- One **principal applicant** – either a new or an established researcher with access to research ethics board approval.
- Co-applicant(s) - at least one researcher with expertise in Registered Practical Nursing and the Ontario health system and/or expertise in health services, policy and/or systems research
- **Knowledge User** - at least one Registered Practical Nurse registered with the College of Nurses of Ontario and currently in the workforce, preferably a member of WeRPN.
- **Partner Organization** – at least one Ontario health system partner representative with decision-making authority, as appropriate.
- **At least one patient/resident/care partner** with lived experience of care by an Ontario Registered Practical Nurse, as appropriate.
- Collaborator (optional) – any team member who contributes significantly to the

development, design, and implementation of the project.

Applicants who demonstrate partnership with the Supporting Patient-Oriented Research (SPOR) - Ontario SPOR Support Unit (OSSU) research network is an asset.

9. APPLICATION SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

As part of the grant application process, applicants are required to submit the Research Application online, with all the sections described below (mandatory), unless otherwise specified:

- a. Title (maximum 250 characters)
- b. Summary of proposal (one page maximum)
- c. Goal(s) and Project Description (five pages maximum) the research question, burden of the issue, and relevance
- d. Expected Outcomes (one page maximum)
- e. List of Reference Articles (Optional) (two pages maximum)
- f. Quality of the team and anticipated contributions of each team member (two pages maximum). Please note that RPN(s) must be a prominent member of the team and not advisory only.
- g. Budget and budget justification (two pages max) including funds requested from WeRPN and cash and in-kind contributions from research partners.
- h. Exclusion of potential reviewers (optional) (one page maximum)- reviewers with current affiliation with the PI will recuse themselves from assessing a proposal
- i. Principal investigator(s) – CV
- j. Co-investigator(s) – CV
- k. Knowledge User – CV
- l. Health System Partner - Letter of engagement/support, as appropriate
- m. Patient/Resident/Care partner – Letter of engagement/support, as appropriate
- n. Collaborator(s) – Letter of engagement/support, as appropriate

10. HOW TO APPLY

All applications must be made according to the application portal. All documents are to be uploaded in pdf format.

The application deadline is 12:00 am EST April 1, 2024. No applications will be accepted after the deadline.

11. PROJECT TIME PERIOD KEY DATES:

- ❖ Funding announcement: November 2023
- ❖ Applications due: April 1, 12:00 AM EST. No late submissions will be accepted.
- ❖ Anticipated notice of decision June 1, 2024, with funding to start on July 1, 2024

All grants are available for a period of up to one year. All travel and research must be completed within one year of receiving the award. Travel or research expenses that occur after a one-year span of the grant will not be eligible unless there is an approved extension of the use of the funds. Extensions can be requested and will be reviewed by WeRPN.

12. ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Applicants may provide additional materials (3 pages maximum) that they think will strengthen their overall case for funding. The review committee is not obligated to consider these materials but may consider them at their discretion.

13. ETHICS: HUMAN SUBJECTS, ANIMALS AND BIOHAZARDS

All research proposals involving ethics (human subjects), animal subjects and/or biohazardous materials must be subject to approval by a recognized institutional review board. Applicants must indicate whether they require approval for use of human and/or animal subjects and/or biohazardous materials in the application.

14. FINAL REPORTS

Grant holders will be expected to report on the use of grant funds, on funded activities undertaken during the grant period, and on outcomes. Successful applicants will be informed of reporting requirements upon receiving notice of the award. Final reports are due to WeRPN 30 days after the completion date of the one-year project.

The sponsored project will be required to be completed in one year. Limited extensions of time may be granted by the Research Advisory Council. However, no financial enhancement to the initially sanctioned grants shall be done. Each research study is expected to result in peer-reviewed major publication by a reputed publisher. This may occur after the completion date of the study.

15. BUDGET

All budget items must adhere to the guidelines outlined for these grants in this document. Adequate budget justification is required in each application (two pages maximum). Decisions will be based on the detailed explanations of costs.

The Institute/individual scholar/group of scholars will have autonomy for framing the budget subject to the following broad expenditure sub-heads:

No	Expenditures for the sole purpose of the research study	Percentage allocation to the total budget of the study
1	Personnel: Full time or Part-time Personnel (does not include salaries of principal or co-investigators or collaborators)	

2	Non-Personnel/Non-Travel: Source Materials/ Software/ Data Base/ Open Access publishing fees	
3	Other: Open access fees; etc.	
4	Travel: Travel/Logistics/ Boarding/	
5	Institutional Overheads – administrative staff, telephones, office supplies, office rent used for research purposes	Not exceeding 5% of anticipated research expenses

Remuneration and Emoluments of Project Staff

- a) Only essential core research staff should be employed for the project.
- b) Such staff could be engaged by the Project Director/Coordinator on a full time or part time basis and the duration and consolidated monthly emoluments of their employment may be decided by the project director within the limits of the sanctioned financial allocation.
- c) A re-appropriation of any expenditure into another existing/new expenditure shall be permissible.

16. BUDGET JUSTIFICATION AND ALLOWABLE COSTS (max. two pages)

a. Personnel

Costs to hire high quality personnel development may be requested. Applicants must pay appropriate wages and include benefits at a rate no higher than 25%. The budget justification description must include a description of duties of the personnel requested, the required qualifications, and an explanation as to why the position is necessary to the project.

b. Non-personnel/Non-travel - Supplies and Services

Whenever possible, number of units and unit costs should be explained. Quotes from suppliers should be provided for purchased services, e.g., IT contracts.

c. Other: open access fees, audio-visual requirements, patient/family engagement costs, recruitment costs

d. Travel

Travel must comply with WeRPN's policies and guidelines and will cover travel and subsistence costs only. Applicants are required to provide documents supporting the costs of all travel and are expected to use the most economical means of transportation and to take advantage of seat sales and travel discount whenever possible. Types of travel and travel costs are detailed below.

- (i) All travel costs and requirements must be in accordance with the following guidelines:
 - a. Air fare, train fare and car rental, as economical as possible
 - b. Mileage
 - i. Mileage costs must be calculated using Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) mileage rate. For 2023, 68¢ per km for the first 5,000 km driven and 62¢ per km driven over the 5,000 km.

- ii. Mileage reimbursement will be provided up to and no greater than the cost of an economy-class airplane ticket and the cost of ground transportation to and from the airport.
- c. Meals and Accommodation
 - i. The cost of meals for business travel purposes is an allowable expense as follows:
 - 1. Maximum \$50.00 for 2 meals per day inclusive of taxes and gratuities.
 - 2. Maximum \$65.00 for 3 meals per day inclusive of taxes and gratuities.
 - 3. Charges for alcoholic beverages will not be reimbursed.
 - ii. To be eligible for accommodation reimbursement for business purposes, a minimum of 40 km from the traveler's residence to the business location is required.
 - iii. Accommodation rates should be as economical as possible.
 - iv. Itemized receipts and proof of payment supporting the cost of meals and accommodation should be provided.
- (ii) Travel expenses can be claimed by individuals as being part of and contributing to the "Project" under the Research Agreement.

CONFERENCE ASSOCIATED TRAVEL COST GUIDELINES:

A. Provincial Conference (Ontario)

- (i) The conference is a recognized academic conference;
- (ii) **The conference is directly relevant to the research interests of the Research Project as per the Research Agreement;**
- (iii) The attendees are part of the Research Project and their attendance will significantly contribute to the research priorities of the Research Agreement;
- (iv) **Total travel costs must be within the approved budget as per the Research Agreement**

B. National Conference (Canada) and International Conference (outside Canada)

- (i) Attendance at National and/or International Conferences will be considered upon submission of a Proposal to WeRPN with budget details and must be within the Approved Budget of the Research Agreement. Criteria for Provincial Conference stated on item (A) applies to National and International Conference

All Conference Associated travel costs and requirements must be in accordance with the Academic Research Project Travel Policy guidelines.

e. Equipment

i. Computing Equipment and Software

No computer equipment funding is allowed under this "Request for proposals".
Funding for relevant/ specialized software is allowed.

ii. Other Equipment

f. Ineligible expenses

Grant funds must be used exclusively for the sole purpose of the funded grant proposal. Equipment costs and purchases are ineligible expenses although could be recognized as in-kind contributions.

17. DECISION

WeRPN reserves the right to determine the eligibility of applications, based on the information therein. WeRPN also reserves the right to interpret the policies governing its funding opportunities. WeRPN reserves the right to exclude from competition any submissions that are incomplete or inconsistent. Excluded applications will not be presented to reviewers for consideration. Once notified, the successful applicant will receive a letter of agreement and must sign a contract explicitly stating the terms of the agreement with WeRPN.

18. PROCEDURE FOR AWARD OF SPONSORED RESEARCH PROJECT

All research proposals received, along with those recommended for research grant funds by the evaluators will be submitted to Dianne Martin, the Chief Executive Officer, WeRPN for final approval.

All the Sponsored Projects after due process of evaluation will be subsequently recommended to the Research Advisory Council. Successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified by June 2024. These results will be transmitted to applicants electronically. Successful applicants are required to provide confirmation of their acceptance within 7 days of award notification.

WeRPN may hold sessions with the prospective recipients of sponsored studies to clarify any academic and financial details.

Each Sponsored Research Study will be asked to provide the name and contact information of their departmental Finance Manager. WeRPN Director of Finance will ensure the necessary information is provided to the awardee's departmental financial office so installment payments can be provided. The allocations will be disbursed in two installments according to the agreement/contract, and the last being released on completion of the study and submission of report, some exceptions may be granted.

Installments subsequent to the first will be released on the basis of the receipt of progress reports. A template will be provided for interim and final progress reports.

19. REPORTING AND EVALUATION

Each sponsored study's Principal Investigator will have a reporting relationship with the Research Advisory Council using interim and final reports.

20. OBLIGATIONS OF THE INSTITUTION

All studies funded by WeRPN under sponsored projects are expected to acknowledge the supportive contribution of WeRPN in all forms of dissemination of findings of the study both in print and on electronic media.

The forwarding institution, where the proposed research project is to be located and administered has to provide, in the prescribed format contained in the Application Form, an undertaking to administer and manage the WeRPN grant and provide logistical support for study.

Such institution will be under obligation to ensure submission of the interim and final reports and audited statement of accounts.

Should an awardee be unable to complete the research study for which he/she is receiving support, WeRPN should be notified immediately.

If the recipient/awardee fails to carry out the terms and conditions of the agreement, WeRPN may, at any time, cancel all further instalments of funds and demand the repayment of an amount equal to any funds WeRPN provided.

21. CONTACT INFORMATION:

Those applicants needing help while preparing the application should communicate with WeRPN well in advance of the application deadline. For assistance with general inquiries, technical issues or proposal questions, this competition is administered by:

Professional Practice Department
WeRPN
5025 Orbitor Drive, Building 5, Suite 200
Mississauga, Ontario L4W 4Y5
Email: research@werpn.com (Subject line: Research Request for proposals)
Phone: (905) 602-4664
Fax: (905) 602-4666
Contact person: Attention: Jen Calver, research Coordinator

22. SUBMISSION PROCESS

Applicants must complete the WeRPN Academic Research Grant Application process online through the www.werp.com research portal.

If you are applying for more than one research project, separate proposals are required for each submission.

**Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.
Thank you for your interest in RPN-specific research literature.**