



CORE Funding: Cluster Operations & Research Essentials

Purpose

This initiative supports interdisciplinary research by funding core operational needs within research clusters, such as shared consumables, maintenance of shared infrastructure, and other communal operational costs (see full list under "Eligible Expenses").

Funding Available

This program provides **operational support** for research clusters in the College of Medicine to ensure continuity and sustainability of core activities. Funding will be provided only for essential items and operational expenses.

CORE funding award amounts will be determined by:

- Clear and detailed budget justification
- Urgency or time-sensitivity of the operational need
- Overall quality and completeness of the application
- Total available funds for the year

Priority will be given to applications demonstrating collaborative benefit, where resources or equipment will serve multiple PIs.

Call for draft budgets will go out June 1st each year. Clusters are invited to submit a draft budget by June 15th for review and approval by June 30th.

Budget Model

Clusters may request funding **up to \$12,000**, based on their operational needs. Funding amounts will be based on actual eligible expenditures and only reimbursed **after March 1**. Approved amounts may be lower than requested, depending on budget justification and availability of funds.

Eligibility

Eligible clusters include:

- Biomedical & Environmental
- Cancer
- Cardiopulmonary
- Imaging and Development
- Virology, Immunology & Bacteriology
- Molecular Design
- Neuro
- Translational Cancer Research

To be eligible for funding, clusters must have either a current **uncommitted balance of no more than \$1,000** or a clearly demonstrated spending plan for any existing balance exceeding this amount within the application's fiscal year.

Eligible Expenses

Operational Expenses (up to \$12,000)

- Consumables and operating supplies
- Computing equipment for shared core equipment
- Computer software for cluster used equipment
- Equipment attachments (less than \$2,000)
- Small equipment (less than \$2,000)
 - Fridge
 - Freezer
 - Pipette Guns, etc.
- Service contracts for shared equipment
- Brokerage charges for shared items
- Infrastructure renovations must be directly tied to improving **shared functionality** (e.g., preparing lab space for shared equipment).
- Cluster Social Funding: Hospitality and staff appreciation expenses (max \$300 per year)
- Moving Expenses: Covered when relocating or optimizing cluster space to accommodate new researchers or improve functionality (excludes moves for personal equipment of individual faculty)
- Equipment Disposal: Covered for shared equipment (e.g., biosafety cabinets), including:
 - Decontamination: ~\$1,000+
 - Disposal: \$500–\$1,000

Ineligible Expenses

- Individual research programs
- Knowledge Translation (KT) events, symposia
- Salary support for technicians, RAs, coordinators, or other personnel
- Student stipends or salaries
- Office furniture
- Personal computer equipment
- Equipment
- Past purchases
- Urgent repairs

Process

1. Clusters submit budget outlining eligible expenses and rough estimate to CORE initiative by June 15th.
2. An approved budget (based on eligible expenses and available funding) will be issued in a letter to cluster leaders by the end of June.
3. In the following March, clusters will be provided with a financial report for review. The cluster lead or delegate will be responsible for confirming the purpose and responsible party for each expense.
IMPORTANT: Expenses outside of the approved budget or eligibility list **will not be reimbursed**. Responsibility for unapproved expenses will fall to the individual responsible and/or the individual's home department.
4. The reimbursed amount will be transferred into the cluster's fund in April. This funding is **not cumulative or additive** and will not exceed the actual eligible expenditures or approved budget.

Funding Terms

- **Deadline:** Call for applications issued annually June 1st, deadline June 15.
- **Notification:** Decisions by the final week of June.
- **Reimbursement:**
 - Clusters spend from their operational fund.
 - Clusters must complete the financial report in March.
 - OVDR reimburses actual approved expenses up to the awarded amount after April 1.
 - Expenses must match the approved budget; deviations are the responsibility of the individual or the cluster member's home department.
- **No Extensions:** Unused funds are forfeited but may be reapplied for in subsequent years.
- Non-compliance disqualifies clusters from future funding.

Application Instructions

For submission to the CORE funding initiative please submit a single application.

1. **Application:** Submit as a **single PDF titled "ClusterName_Year"** to ovdr.funding@usask.ca

Required Components:

- Application Form
- Budget and Justification
- (Optional) Letter of Support (max 2 pages)

Notification of Success

Formal notice will be provided by email.

Contact

For inquiries please contact ovdr.funding@usask.ca

FAQs

1. Do we get the \$12,000 upfront?

No. This is a **reimbursement program**. You spend from your own cluster fund (running a deficit in the fund is fine), and after March 1, eligible expenses (up to your approved budget) will be reimbursed.

2. What if we don't spend the full approved amount?

Only actual eligible expenses will be reimbursed. Any unused portion of the award remains with CORE and will not be rolled forward.

3. What if we accidentally spend on something ineligible?

Those expenses will **not be reimbursed**. The responsible individual or their home department must cover the cost.

4. What counts as a shared operational cost?

Anything used by multiple members of the cluster to support ongoing research—e.g., shared lab supplies, common equipment service contracts, or moving costs to optimize shared space.

5. Can we buy new equipment?

No. Equipment purchases are ineligible. Only expenses related to shared equipment **maintenance or disposal** are allowed.

6. Does the \$300 for hospitality come out of the \$12,000 cap?

Yes. It is included in the \$12,000 total.

7. Who decides what's reimbursed?

The **OVD**R cross-references your March spending record with your approved budget and the list of eligible expenses. This is an administrative review only, there is no formal adjudication. Only approved and eligible items will be reimbursed.