

Request for Proposals

Advancing Cannabis Research, Education and Awareness in a Legalized and Regulated Environment

Background

Budget 2018 allocated \$10 million over five years to the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) to help assess the impact of cannabis use on the mental health of Canadians, and \$10 million over five years to the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) to support research on cannabis use in Canada. The budget specified that “these two investments will help inform future policy development, building on earlier significant public education investments of \$46 million that have helped inform Canadians.”

There are pronounced gaps in knowledge concerning the negative impacts of cannabis use on mental health outcomes, the potential therapeutic benefits of cannabis and cannabinoids, the influence of mental health problems and illnesses on patterns of cannabis use, and the experiences and needs of diverse populations who live with cannabis use disorder and/or a mental illness. The MHCC is well positioned to draw from its expertise in a range of areas and views these investments as an opportunity to engage diverse populations, including youth, emerging adults, seniors, LGBTQ2+, Indigenous, and immigrant, refugee, ethnocultural, and racialized (IRER) populations.

Over the next five years (2018-2023), the MHCC will be investing in short- and long-term research initiatives to help fill these research gaps, strengthen the evidence base in Canada, and expand cannabis research specific to mental health, including the relationship between cannabis use and mental health outcomes (e.g., post-traumatic stress, psychosis, anxiety, depression, addiction, co-morbid conditions, etc.), the potential harms and/or benefits of cannabis and cannabinoid use on the mental health of people living in Canada, and the social determinants of health of target populations.

The aim of the work outlined below is to provide the MHCC with a snapshot of the state of knowledge and evidence on cannabis and mental health in Canada and internationally. This work will require a thorough understanding of the knowledge base to help inform MHCC’s work in cannabis and mental health over the next five years.

Work Requirements

The MHCC is seeking a consultant to conduct a systematic review and updated scan of best evidence and existing research related to mental health and cannabis use in Canada. This work will fulfill the need for an up-to-date scan of research and best evidence related to cannabis use and mental health. The review and scan will help inform the Canadian Institutes of Health Research’s (CIHR’s) Integrated Cannabis Research Strategy¹ and new work MHCC and other researchers will undertake across the

¹ CIHR, in collaboration with Health Canada’s Cannabis Legalization and Regulation Branch, is leading the development of the Integrated Cannabis Research Strategy (ICRS). The ICRS will support research to meet federal, provincial and territorial (FPT) evidence needs. It will provide a frame for existing federally-led cannabis research activities but will also serve as a guide for future initiatives and collaboration in the areas of harm reduction and the medical benefits of cannabis. The ICRS will facilitate research collaboration and synergies across sectors and jurisdictions, helping to align strategic research priorities.

country following the legalization and regulation of cannabis in October of 2018. This research will necessarily build on existing research priority setting forums hosted by CCSA and CIHR,² and national and international environmental scans and reviews completed to date.³

The scope of this work will have to consider the range of perspectives concerning the complex relationship between cannabis use and mental health problems and illnesses, including the state of neuroscience knowledge, prevention and early intervention in mental health and substance use, public health issues and social harms in a legalized and regulated environment, harm reduction approaches for ensuring safe use of cannabis and cannabinoids, health equity, the therapeutic use of cannabis, and the social determinants of health impacting substance use more broadly in all populations.

Deliverables

1. Scan report.
2. A standalone executive summary of the report.
3. A PowerPoint presentation based on the contents of the report.

Evaluation Criteria

1. Strong academic background in substance use policy and research in general, and in cannabis and mental health policy and research specifically.
2. Experience in developing environmental scans, systematic reviews, or comparable comprehensive research summaries.
3. Excellent written communication skills and demonstrated experience in consolidating research findings into plain language.
4. Established relationships with cannabis researchers and research networks in Canada.

Proposals and Budget

Proposals to complete the deliverables will be accepted until 5PM ET on Friday September 28, 2018 and should include the following:

1. A statement of how the project will be undertaken (no more than 5 pages);
2. A list of names, CVs, and roles of project team member(s);
3. A proposed timeline for deliverables;
4. A detailed budget and cost proposal.

The budget shall not exceed \$50,000 (including GST, PST, and HST, where applicable) and all work must be completed by February 1, 2019.

Please send proposals to:

Yelena Kapayeva

Email: ykapayeva@mentalhealthcommission.ca

² See CCSA's [National Research Agenda on the Non-Medical Use of Cannabis](#) and CIHR's [Health Research Needs and Priorities Related to Cannabis Legalization and Regulation](#).

³ See, for example, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's 2017 report, "*The health effects of cannabis and cannabinoids: Current state of evidence and recommendations for research.*"