



# **Call for Collaborative Open Science Drug Development Projects for Orphan Diseases**

## **An initiative from CQDM and Conscience**

**Deadline to participate in the selection round with a Full Application: October 16, 2024**

*(Please note that you must notify CQDM no later than September 27, 2024 of your intention to submit a Full Application)*

Conscience and CQDM are joining forces to support collaborative translational drug development projects using an open science approach in areas historically overlooked by the pharmaceutical industry. This partnership creates a unique funding opportunity that brings together experts from academia and industry to support the development of therapies for underserved diseases.

### **SCOPE AND RESEARCH AGENDA**

This CQDM and Conscience initiative specifically focuses on **open science research in life-threatening or severely debilitating diseases with high unmet medical needs historically dismissed by the pharmaceutical industry**, such as antibiotic resistance and rare diseases. The intent of the initiative is to:

- Increase research collaborations and partnerships between universities and companies in the life sciences industry to improve the treatment of underserved diseases.
- Foster technological maturation and create a path for drug development in an open science model.
- Promote the knowledge, capabilities and new technologies developed in public institutions, and invest in local SMEs.

### **EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

Evidence clearly shows that increasing equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in research environments enhances excellence, innovation, and creativity. CQDM and Conscience are committed to excellence through equity and encourage applicants of diverse backgrounds to apply to this funding opportunity, which will promote the expression of diverse perspectives, approaches, and experiences, including those of underrepresented groups.



## CALENDAR

Call for applications	August 15, 2024
Deadline to notify CQDM of your intent to apply	September 27, 2024
Full Application deadline	October 16, 2024
Notice of decision to applicants	December 2024
Funding start date	March 2025

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

### Eligible Applicants:

- The academic principal investigator must be based at a research institution in Quebec (university and affiliated hospital, research institute, College Centers for the Transfer of Technology (CCTT), public research center).
- Academic investigators must work in close collaboration with at least one small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) active in Quebec. To be eligible, an SME must:
  - Have a significant participation in the project;
  - Have an address in Quebec, be legally constituted according to the federal or Quebec laws in force and be registered with the Quebec Enterprise Register;
  - Have R&D and/or production activities in Quebec;
  - Have 249 employees or less.

### Eligible Projects:

- Research teams must include a minimum of one independent researcher from a research institution in Quebec and one Quebec SME.
- Research teams must commit to open science principles, and teams must provide public access to data generated under this funded proposal.
- The technology readiness level must be between 2 and 6 at the start of the project, which includes phase 1 clinical trials.
- Socio-economic benefits must be generated for Quebec and for the company partners involved in the project.
- Trainees (MSc student, PhD student, and/ or postdoctoral fellow) must take part in the project.

## FUNDING

### Grant Duration

Maximum 3 years

### Funding start date

March 2025



## Budget

Each project should have expenses in at least one Quebec research institutions **AND** in at least one Quebec SME

The eligible budget in **Quebec research institutions** must be between \$500,000 and \$3.75M\*

\*CQDM's total contribution to Quebec research institutions cannot exceed \$500,000 per year.

The maximum eligible budget in **Quebec SME** varies according to the technology readiness level:

- TRL 2-3 (Chemical probe to hit) : \$500,000 (maximum Conscience contribution of \$165,000)
- TRL 3-4 (Hit to lead compound) : \$1,000,000 (maximum Conscience contribution of \$333,000)
- TRL 4-6 (Lead to drug candidate, and clinical trials) : \$3,250,000 (maximum Conscience contribution of \$1,072,500)

## Funding details

The financial support will vary depending on the location of the expenses (incurred in Quebec research institutions or incurred in Quebec SME). Contact CQDM and Conscience for help in the funding structure.

### **For expenses incurred in Quebec research institutions:**

- Quebec research institutions will receive financial support from CQDM and Conscience corresponding to up to 50% of eligible expenses within Quebec research institutions (40% from CQDM + 10% from Conscience). Conscience's maximum contribution related to the technology readiness level applies (see above).
- At least one eligible Quebec SME must contribute to the funding in Quebec research institutions with a cash contribution corresponding to a minimum of 20% of eligible expenses
- The remaining required funding (30%) may come from the Quebec SME or other sources, including Canadian and foreign companies, foundations, or non-Ministère de l'Économie, de l'Innovation et de l'Énergie (MEIE)/non-strategic innovation fund (SIF) government contributions

### **For expenses incurred in Quebec SME:**



- Quebec SME(s) will receive financial support from Conscience corresponding to 33% of eligible expenses within the Quebec SME. Conscience’s maximum contribution related to the technology readiness level applies (see above).
- Other non-strategic innovation fund (SIF) government funding may complement Conscience’s funding but without exceeding 75% funding from government source

Applicants are invited to contact CQDM at [mpaquette@cqdm.org](mailto:mpaquette@cqdm.org) to explore different funding scenarios. Fictional eligible scenarios for a TRL 4-6 are shown as examples below :

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
Expenses in research institute	1,500,000 \$	2,000,000 \$	1,000,000 \$
Expenses in SME	1,500,000 \$	1,000,000 \$	2,000,000 \$
Total expenses*	3,000,000 \$	3,000,000 \$	3,000,000 \$
Funding sent to research institute	750,000 \$ (50% of research institute expenses)	1,000,000 \$ (50% of research institute expenses)	500,000 \$ (50% of research institute expenses)
Funding sent to SME	500,000 \$ (33% of company expense)	333,333 \$ (33% of company expense)	666,666 \$ (33% of company expense)
Total funding from CQDM and Conscience	1,250,000 \$	1,333,333 \$	1,166,666 \$
Cash sent from SME to research institute	750,000 \$ (50% of research institute expenses) or 300,000 \$ (if an additional 450,000\$ in non-MEIE/non-SIF funding is secured)	1,000,000 \$ (50% of research institute expenses) or 400,000 \$ (if an additional 600,000\$ in non-MEIE/non-SIF funding is secured)	500,000 \$ (50% of research institute expenses) or 200,000 \$ (if an additional 300,000\$ in non-MEIE/non-SIF funding is secured)
Cash spent by SME on SME in-house activities	1,500,000 \$ (66% of company expense)	666,666 \$ (66% of company expense)	1,333,333 \$ (66% of company expense)



\* Additional expenses related to indirect cost of research, management fee, and membership fee must be added to the total expenses.

## **ELIGIBLE EXPENSES**

Expenses incurred by Quebec research institutions and Quebec SMEs are eligible.

Types of eligible expenses include:

- Fellowships and wages for research personnel assigned to the project (Employees directly involved in the research, postdoctoral fellows and students);
- Laboratory equipment, consumables and supplies, as well as animal facilities and platform fees;
- Travel expenses (project-related travel, collaborations, conferences, etc.) and knowledge dissemination costs.
- The rental or purchase of small equipment of a maximum value of \$25,000 per item that is necessary for the realization of the project.
- Some subcontracting expenses to Quebec companies that are not partners in the project can be authorized when the activity is essential to the project and cannot be performed by the research institution.

The following expenses are **not** eligible:

- Lease (or purchase) of facilities and equipment in excess of \$25,000 per item.
- Salary of the academic principal investigator (PI), co-investigators, or any team members holding an independent academic or research position.
- Intellectual property costs (patent applications, patent maintenance fees).
- Expenses not directly related to the project (for example, interest, losses on investments/projects, taxes, fines, penalties, provisions for contingencies, life insurances, unreasonable compensation for officers and employees, amortization of unrealized appreciation of assets, legal/accounting fee related to agreements, product development not associated with the project, advertising, entertainment, donations).

Please note that this list is not exhaustive and that CQDM and Conscience must be consulted on expenses that are not listed here to determine the eligibility of other categories of expenditure. Applicants are encouraged to contact CQDM before applying for other types of expenses.

## **APPLICATION PROCESS**

### **Deadline: October 16, 2024**

Please note that you must notify us no later than September 27, 2024 of your intent to submit a Full Application.



### Steps for submitting an application:

1. Contact [Mathieu Paquette](mailto:mpaquette@cqdm.org), Director - Business Development, to validate the details of the funding opportunity and obtain the application form and budget template at the following address: [mpaquette@cqdm.org](mailto:mpaquette@cqdm.org).
2. Submit a 2 pages expression of interest form (including the project title, a short description of the project and open science component, the names and affiliations of the researchers, and the total budget) to the following address by September 27, 2024 at the latest: [appliquez-apply@cqdm.org](mailto:appliquez-apply@cqdm.org). **Teams are encouraged to submit this summary as soon as possible.**
3. CQDM and Conscience will validate the eligibility of the project and invite you to submit the full application within 1 week of submission of the project summary
4. Submit the completed application to [appliquez-apply@cqdm.org](mailto:appliquez-apply@cqdm.org) by October 16, 2024.

### SELECTION CRITERIA

- Scientific merit and feasibility of the project
- Fit with scope of life-threatening or severely debilitating diseases historically dismissed by the pharmaceutical industry
- Commitment to open science values
- Differentiation, competitiveness, and added value of the proposed technology
- Quality of the collaboration/team
- Benefits for the private partners
- Socio-economical benefits for the province of Quebec

### EVALUATION PROCESS

The key evaluation steps are:

- An independent scientific evaluation based on the evaluation criteria listed above.
- A review of the non-scientific aspects of the project, including the level of commitment of the companies, the added value of the collaboration and the specific risks inherent to the project.
- The overall evaluation of the project by CQDM's scientific advisory committee, which is responsible for making funding recommendations.
- Approval of the project by CQDM and Conscience.
- Approval of funding by the Ministère de l'Économie, de l'Innovation et de l'Énergie (MEIE) and Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF).

The recipients will be notified in December 2024.

### RESEARCH AGREEMENT AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY POLICY

- The research institutions that will be awarded a research grant from CQDM/Conscience and the successful projects' company partners must accept



- the terms and conditions of CQDM and Conscience and commit to sign a research agreement within 3 months following the receipt of the CQDM's approval letter.
- CQDM will provide the template of the research agreement which will precisely define the milestones to be reached, the timeline (Gantt chart), and the deliverables at the end of the project.
  - An open access data agreement will also have to be signed by all the research institutions and company partners associated with the project and attached to the research agreement. It is expected that open science principles will be central to this agreement.

For any question regarding the eligibility of your project, please contact Mathieu Paquette, Director - Business Development, at the following address: [mpaquette@cqdm.org](mailto:mpaquette@cqdm.org)