

## Patient-Oriented Research Graduate Fellowship 2025-26 Guidelines

### About the Fellowship

This Fellowship opportunity is sponsored by the BC SUPPORT Unit Island Centre (Island Centre) which is embedded within the [Island Health Research Department](#). The Island Centre supports Patient-Oriented Research (POR) with the goals of building research capacity and providing support for multidisciplinary POR teams across the Island Health region. POR is research that is done in **partnership with patients**, answers research questions that matter to patients, and aims to improve health outcomes and experiences. The term “patients” is defined broadly to include anyone with lived experience of a health condition, including informal caregivers, family, and friends.

Learn more about the [Canadian Institutes for Health Research Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research \(SPOR\)](#).

### Description of Funding

The POR Graduate Fellowships are intended for students enrolled in a full-time Masters or PhD program at the time of application, and who are interested and committed to undertake Patient-Oriented Research that aligns with the needs of the health system.

The objectives of this funding are to:

- Develop capacity through collaboration between research partners (e.g. patient partners, students, supervisors, clinicians, community members, and health system decision-makers);
- Create opportunities for research partners to work together, from conceptualization of the research question through to dissemination and implementation of results;
- Provide students with training and support in the principles and practices of POR;
- Demonstrate the impact of the Fellowship for recipients and patients; and
- Encourage recipients to use POR approaches in the future.

### Available Funding

**Total funding envelope:** \$60,000 with an additional \$15,000 dedicated to research that focuses on dementia care in the Comox Valley<sup>1</sup>.

#### Individual Award Amounts:

**Master's students:** up to \$10,000

**PhD students:** up to \$15,000

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<sup>1</sup> Comox Valley POR Dementia Care Fellowship opportunity is sponsored by the Comox Valley Community Foundation who made a generous contribution from the Robert and Florence Filberg Fund, held at the Vancouver Foundation, and facilitated by the Comox Valley Healthcare Foundation.

## Funding Details

The competition will provide one-time funding for Masters' students at **up to** \$10,000 and PhD students at **up to** \$15,000. The number and value of awards given will be determined based on the number and quality of applications received. Funding will be administered as a stipend and students can choose to accept the full stipend or use a portion for research expenses such as honouraria, printing costs, travel expenses, etc.

The Recipient Institution must administer the funds for the benefit of each participating award holder in accordance with the Tri-Council Agreement on the Administration of Agency Grants and Awards by Research Institutions, and with any other relevant policies of the Agency.

The Recipient Institution will repay any funds which do not fully conform to applicable Tri-Agency regulations, policies and requirements.

## Eligibility

### Applicants must:

- Be enrolled in, or accepted to, a graduate program at a post-secondary institution in British Columbia.
- Be registered as a full-time, regular (not on-leave) student during the term of the Fellowship.
- Be conducting or planning a health-related thesis/dissertation research project.
- Have a confirmed thesis/dissertation supervisor who is an established faculty member at their home institution.
- Be conducting research that involves or is relevant to populations within the Island Health region.

### Other notes:

As health is influenced by numerous and varied determinants, students who are registered in departments other than Health/Medicine are also eligible to apply. International students are eligible for this Fellowship.

## Examples of POR

Students may consider some of the following POR approaches to research during the term of their Fellowship:

- Inviting patient partners to be part of a project advisory group
- Convening a workshop with patient partners to explore their perspectives of a particular lived experience, or to talk about their priorities for research
- Travelling to a POR conference or workshop to learn from others in the field
- Collaborating with patient partners on research and project design (e.g. defining/refining a research question; helping to determine study methods; assisting with data collection or analysis; co-developing knowledge translation products)
- Hosting community dialogues to better understand patient needs

## Priority Research Areas

Topics should align with one of Island Health's strategic priorities below. Students who wish to conduct research in other areas will be considered for funding but must show that they are addressing an identified health system need or patient priority.

- I. Improve the Experiences Quality and Outcomes for the People We Serve**  
*Examples of priority populations include seniors (including LTC and home and community care enhancements), patients needing surgery*
- II. Improve the Experience, Health & Well-Being of all People at Island Health**  
*Enhancing access to primary care services and rural and remote health care services*
- III. Increase Health Human Resource Capacity & Adapt to Changing Workforce Needs**  
*Addressing capacity issues in acute hospitals and improving access to care*
- IV. Improve Population Health and Wellness, Reduce Health Inequities**  
*Addressing knowledge and service gaps related to Indigenous cultural safety and anti-racism, as identified by Indigenous community members, mental health and substance use care*

Students interested in applying to the [Comox Valley Dementia Care Fellowship](#) opportunity must outline in their application how their project will address one of the priority areas below specific to the Comox Valley (these were identified collectively at a [POR workshop](#)):

- 1. Staying at Home Longer:** This priority area emphasizes choice, autonomy and support systems that enable those with lived experience of dementia to stay home longer; examples include POR examining day programs, transportation, housing options, home supports, or social isolation.
- 2. Caregiver Supports and Respite:** This priority area highlights the need for different level-of-care-dependent adult day programs, caregiver education and training, access to emergency and long-term respite beds, and reduced waitlists for programs and services.
- 3. Dementia-Friendly Communities:** Community engagement & building on existing community supports, dementia education and awareness in community, infrastructure and transportation, and stigma were identified as priority areas for POR.
- 4. Navigating Supports:** Coordination of current dementia care resources, improved access to services, mapping of available services, and transportation services beyond medical appointments were identified as priority navigation supports that warrant POR.

## Key Dates

**Call for proposals released:** September 23, 2025

**Deadline for application submission:** November 5, 2025

**Anticipated notification of results:** December 17, 2025

**Anticipated start of funding:** January 23, 2026

**End of funding:** January 31, 2027 (note that this has been updated from the previous guidelines)

## Fellowship Conditions and Responsibilities

Submission of an application implies acceptance of the following conditions by the applicant:

- **Letter of Agreement:** The successful candidate will be required to sign a letter of agreement with the Conditions and Responsibilities of the Fellowship before the award will be administered.
- **Acknowledgement:** Any formal presentation, publication, or thesis resulting from the Fellowship must acknowledge the support of the BC SUPPORT Unit or for the Comox Valey Dementia Care fellowship: “the Robert and Florence Filberg Medical Research Fund, the Comox Valley Community Foundation and Comox Valley Health Care Foundation”.
- **Training:** Active participation in one or more training sessions on POR will be encouraged.
- **Multi-disciplinary teams:** Successful POR requires the involvement of multiple interest-holders; the BC SUPPORT Unit will facilitate connections between successful Fellowship applicants and clinicians, healthcare professionals, or patient partners as required.
- **Interim Reporting:** The successful candidate will be required to provide a brief written report (maximum 2 pages) to provide an update on their project and POR-related activities by September 30, 2026.
- **Final Report:** A brief summary (maximum 2 pages) of the activities and accomplishments achieved during the Fellowship will be submitted within six weeks of the end of the funding period. Note that your thesis or dissertation does not need to be complete at this stage.

## Application Components

[Application form](#) – to be completed and the following uploaded (in .doc or PDF format):

- A. A copy of the **applicant’s current CV**
- B. **Proposal which must include:**
  1. **Applicant statement** (max 250 words): Describe why you are interested in pursuing a Fellowship in Patient-Oriented Research.
  2. **Patient-Oriented Research project plan** (max 1,000 words): Provide an overview of your POR plan, including background on the topic, alignment with health system priority area, specific project aims, and proposed patient/interest-holder engagement methods, and how equity, diversity, and inclusion will be considered throughout the project.

3. **Knowledge Translation plan** (max 500 words): Describe how you will share, implement, and/or create impact with your proposed project.
- C. **Supervisor letter of support**: Describe the applicant's suitability for this Fellowship; how they will benefit from training and support in the area of Patient-Oriented Research; how you (as a supervisor) commit to supporting their project (e.g. through funding, provision of facilities or equipment, patient engagement support or transfer of knowledge/expertise).

Please do not include any additional materials in the application, as they will not be considered.

### Selection Process and Review Criteria

The selection committee (comprised of patient partners, community members and representatives from academic and clinical partners) will follow a formal selection process and will evaluate each of the submissions, taking into account the following:

- Quality and promise of the applicant (25%)
- Alignment with Comox Valley dementia care research priorities, quality and clarity of the proposed POR activities (25%)
- Research environment (e.g. supervisory excellence, resources required and/or available to conduct the POR project) (25%)
- Potential impact, as demonstrated by Knowledge Translation Plan (25%)

### Contact - please reach out!

Have questions? Need help applying?

We're here to support you, email us at [researchfacilitation@islandhealth.ca](mailto:researchfacilitation@islandhealth.ca) to ask any questions or to book a meeting with our team.

### Application Submission

Please submit applications online no later than 4pm (PST) on November 5, 2025 using the following link:

**[POR GRADUATE FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION FORM](#)**

*Island Health acknowledges the homelands of the three Indigenous families on and around Vancouver Island: the Kwakwaka'wakw, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Coast Salish peoples. We are committed to addressing the ongoing impacts of colonialism and Indigenous-specific racism, and strive to decolonize research and promote cultural safety and humility. We welcome diverse ways of knowing, and seek to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion for all. Above all, we believe meaningful research must foster respectful relationships that put people first.*