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## Applied Health Research Questions Procedure

### INTRODUCTION

While drugs improve health and save lives, they are not without risk when poorly managed. In Ontario, new strategies are needed to improve medication management quality and better choose, use and remove medications.

The Ontario Pharmacy Evidence Network (OPEN) was founded in 2013 and is co-led by experts at the University of Waterloo's School of Pharmacy and the Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy at the University of Toronto. OPEN is one of Canada's leading collaborative networks dedicated to medication management with more than 50 researchers and over 100 student and trainee members. In addition, OPEN has engaged patients, healthcare providers and policy makers in over 20 research studies funded by the Ontario Health System Research Fund (HSRF) to understand the quality, outcomes and value of medication management services. While OPEN has identified many successes, it also identified challenges in how these services reach the most vulnerable/high-needs patients, operational, delivery and integration issues, the absence of regular monitoring or quality improvement process, and questions regarding sustainability.

In October 2017, OPEN was awarded \$2 million in funding by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC), for a project titled OPEN: STIMULUS, which is helping OPEN in advancing its work through building quality, sustainable medication management services for patients and the broader healthcare system.

One of the key components of OPEN: STIMULUS project is to provide Applied Health Research Questions (AHRQ) support to any Knowledge User interested in questions pertaining to how the initiatives that leverage patient and community engagement, implementation science and quality improvement could optimize medication management while ensuring system sustainability. The aim of the AHRQ, which is supported by the MOHLTC, is to help provide data, analyses and knowledge to build a strong, evidence-based foundation for innovation and decision making. To achieve this objective, Knowledge Users are encouraged to pose questions (via AHRQ process) to the Research Providers in order to obtain research evidence, that will then be used to inform planning, policy and program development that will benefit the broader Ontario health system.

### PARTICIPANTS

**Knowledge Users:** Individuals representing Ontario organizations who are seeking research evidence to inform planning, the provision of services, policy and/or program development in the health and health care system. Examples of a Knowledge User include, but are not limited to: policy development staff, planners and decision-makers from across the Ontario health system including, but not limited to: Ontario ministries, Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs), hospitals (acute and rehabilitation), and provincial associations and agencies (e.g., Health Quality Ontario, Public Health Ontario). Research Providers may also suggest their own local Knowledge Users. *Commercial entities may be considered Knowledge Users if it can be justified that the response to their question would benefit the broader health care system as well as additional Knowledge Users. As well, entities that have a substantial influence on pharmacy*

**Disclaimer:** Information contained in this document has been adapted from the [Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's Applied Health Research Question \(AHRQ\) 2017/18 Guidelines](#).

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*organization policy for at least 100 pharmacists in Ontario as justified through their organizational structure, membership and policy implementation processes, may be classified as potential knowledge users (Subject to MOHLTC review).*

**Research Providers (OPEN):** Research institutes, centres, programs or projects that receive funding from the Research, Analysis and Evaluation Branch through the HSRF under a Transfer Payment Accountability Agreement. (Knowledge translation and exchange HSRF programs and projects are excluded from the AHRQ process).

**Research Planning and Management Unit (RPMU) in the Research, Analysis and Evaluation Branch (MOHLTC):** Oversees the HSRF and functions as the coordinator and evaluator of the AHRQ process. The RPMU's role is to facilitate direct contact between Knowledge Users and Research Providers. The RPMU is available as support if questions or issues arise, (e.g., demand exceeds the organization's available funds or capacity to respond, insufficient demand, poor alignment of the question with organization's expertise, advice on prioritizing, etc.). The RPMU will also evaluate the HSRF process, and introduce modifications to it as appropriate.

#### THE AHRQ PROCESS OBJECTIVES

- Facilitates the direct interaction and dialogue between policy makers, providers, development/planning staff and researchers.
- Identifies research needs and gaps in research evidence across the health system.
- Informs priority setting for research projects by supporting research within these areas.
- Disseminates research findings broadly.

#### TYPES OF RESPONSES

Once a Knowledge User has submitted an AHRQ it is likely we will generate one of the following three types of responses:

1. **Type 1 - Rapid response** – Preliminary information in **one week or less** providing a “first blush” response. Examples include expert opinion or relevant systematic reviews, articles or reports on a given policy topic.
2. **Type 2 - Research report or technical brief** – **Approximately 4 – 8 weeks** of work to quickly synthesize the existing research evidence on a given topic. The final product could be a presentation or a report. Upon conclusion of the AHRQ, the researcher will complete the AHRQ Summary of Findings Form which will be disseminated broadly once completed.
3. **Type 3 - Research project** – Where it has been confirmed that new knowledge must be generated (i.e., existing knowledge is not sufficient for planning or policy development requirements), new research projects will be initiated. The duration may be **months, or years**, depending on the project. For longer-term projects, it is expected that some information be provided within the funded fiscal year. Institutions should contact the Research Planning and Management Unit prior to undertaking any longer-term projects. Organizations should not initiate new multi-year projects if they have one-year funding agreements unless they can produce some interim or preliminary findings during the funded period. At the end of the project, the researcher will

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complete an AHRQ Summary of Findings Form which will be disseminated broadly. Interim or preliminary findings will not be disseminated.

**It should be noted that not every question will result in a research response.**

#### RESPONSIBILITIES AS A KNOWLEDGE USER

- Initiate direct contact with OPEN by submitting a Knowledge User AHRQ Request form for Type 2 and Type 3 responses. **Please email your request to Mansur Mehdi OPEN Program Manager, at [mansur.mehdi@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:mansur.mehdi@uwaterloo.ca), and Dr. Nancy M. Waite, Program Lead at [nmwaite@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:nmwaite@uwaterloo.ca)**
- Work with OPEN to identify which of the three AHRQ responses is most appropriate given your information need and timeline for a decision.
- Contact OPEN for assistance if questions/issues arise.
- Provide OPEN with a brief summary of the background and the purpose of the actual question proposed.
- Develop research question and obtain approvals from senior decision maker (for example, assistant deputy minister, executive director) to ensure that the research questions reflect the need for knowledge in the Ontario health system. Questions based on personal interest or other non-system purposes are not suitable for the AHRQ process.
- For Type 2 and Type 3 responses, with reference to interim/pre-final report, participate in the OPEN-led meeting/call before the final product is delivered.
- Potentially participate in a short telephone survey about the AHRQ process.

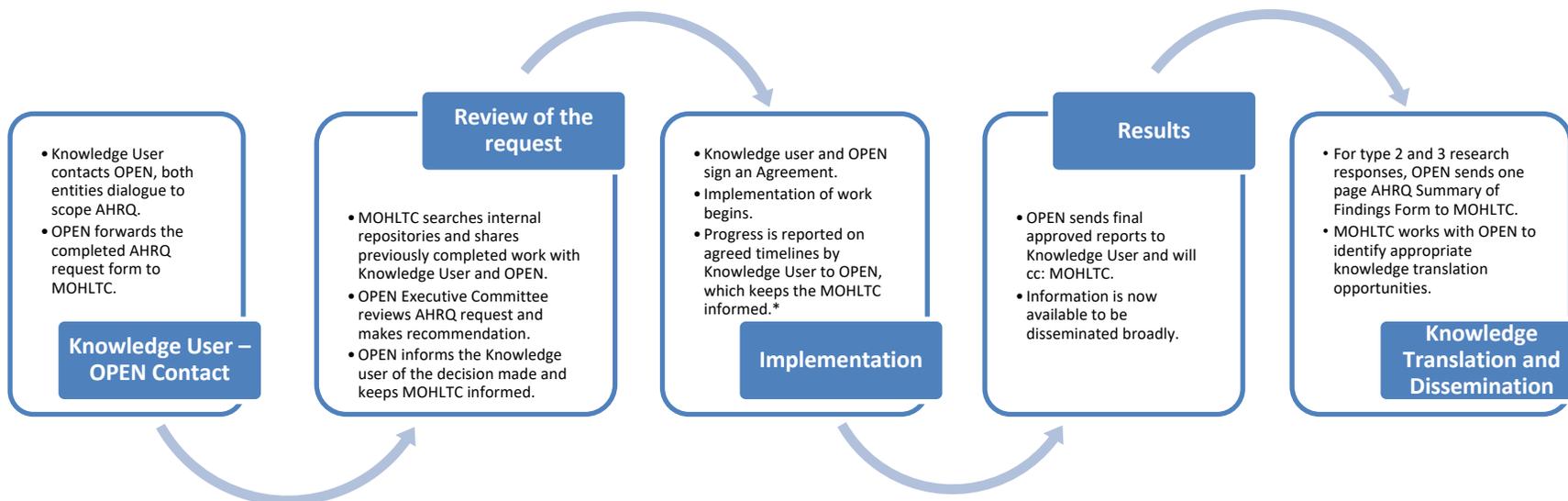
If you have any questions, comments, or concerns please do not hesitate to contact:

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### AHRQ Process Map

The illustration below highlights the AHRQ process:



**NOTES:**

\*For Type 2 and Type 3 responses, OPEN shall schedule interim/pre-final report meeting with Knowledge User and include MOHLTC, as required. Unless advised otherwise, all information/requests sent to OPEN should be emailed to [mansur.mehdi@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:mansur.mehdi@uwaterloo.ca) with copy to [nmwaite@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:nmwaite@uwaterloo.ca)