

Funding by:



ALS CANADA
RESEARCH PROGRAM



Fondation
Brain Canada
Foundation



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Canada Canada

Terms of Reference: ALS Canada-Brain Canada Career Transition Award 2023

Overview

The vision of ALS Canada is to achieve “a future without ALS”, and the vision of Brain Canada is “Bold science for brain health”. To build momentum for continued pursuance of new treatments and a better understanding of the disease through the end of the decade and beyond, it is imperative that promising young investigators are nurtured into a career focused on ALS research. This program will identify and engage rising stars pursuing innovative research in labs and academic institutions in Canada. This award has the long-term goal of developing the next generation of scientists across various disciplines within basic and clinical sciences, contributing to knowledge generation and translation in ALS.

To fulfil this mission, ALS Canada and Brain Canada will provide a three (3) year award to support a talented young investigator to pursue advanced research and transition into a junior faculty position at a Canadian institution. The expectation is that this additional training will allow award recipients to increase their knowledge and skills, thereby enhancing continuation of their career in ALS-related research and improving their competitiveness for a junior faculty position in Canada. Successful candidates will expand their research horizons and develop independence to become a leader in the field in a manner that sets them apart from their mentor(s).

About the ALS Society of Canada

The ALS Society of Canada is working to change what it means to live with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, an unrelenting and currently terminal disease. Grounded in and informed by the Canadian ALS community, we respond to the urgent unmet need for life-changing treatments by investing in high-quality research that will fuel scientific discovery and by engaging industry, supporting increased clinical capacity and advocating for equitable, affordable and timely access to proven therapies. Responding to the tremendous need for current and credible ALS knowledge, awareness and education, we empower Canadians affected by ALS to navigate the current realities of ALS, be informed consumers of ALS information, and advocate effectively for change. In Ontario, we provide direct community services to help people navigate ALS. Founded in 1977, we are a registered charity that receives no core government funding – our work is powered by generous donors who share our vision of a future without ALS. www.als.ca

About Brain Canada Foundation

Brain Canada Foundation (Brain Canada) is a national registered charity that enables and supports excellent, innovative, paradigm-changing brain research in Canada. For more than two decades, Brain Canada has made the case for the brain as a single, complex system with commonalities across the range of neurological disorders, mental illnesses and addictions, brain and spinal cord injuries. Looking at the brain as one system has underscored the need for increased collaboration across disciplines and

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institutions, and to ensure that Canada has a robust pipeline of talent to remain at the forefront in the field of brain research. Brain Canada's vision is to understand the brain, in health and illness, to improve lives, and achieve societal impact.

The Canada Brain Research Fund (CBRF) is an innovative arrangement between the Government of Canada, through Health Canada, and Brain Canada Foundation, designed to encourage Canadians to increase their support of brain research, and maximize the impact and efficiency of those investments. The Fund supports the very best Canadian neuroscience, fostering collaborative research and accelerating the pace of discovery, in order to improve the health and quality of life of Canadians who suffer from brain disorders. To date, Health Canada has invested over \$155 million through the CBRF, which has been matched by Brain Canada Foundation and its donors and partners. www.braincanada.ca

Funding

The award will be for up to three (3) years for a total of \$250,000 CAD. Each year, ALS Canada and Brain Canada will provide a \$60,000 salary and \$20,000 research allowance, with \$30,000 for research allowance in year three. Year two funding will be dependent on a progress interview with an expert panel. The recipient will not be formally re-reviewed, but activity and progress towards seeking and achieving an independent position will be assessed to consider second year funding. The progress interview will largely be considered for guidance and support, but recommendations to halt funding are possible if the recipient no longer demonstrates promise in achieving an independent position. A year two progress report will be provided two weeks in advance of the interview.

Year three funding will begin upon achieving an independent position at a qualifying Canadian institution, defined according to [CIHR guidelines](#). This may be deferred for up to one year to allow for additional time in securing a position. The intent of year three funding is to provide modest incentive for competitive hiring. If an independent position is achieved in the first two years, the remainder of the three-year award will be provided to the recipient as junior faculty. If an independent position is secured at an institution outside of Canada, the applicant would no longer be eligible for year three funding.

Year three funding at the faculty level is contingent upon receipt of:

- A signed letter of offer from the institution where the faculty position will be held, indicating the start date
- Report indicating successes leading to faculty position (limit 2 pages)

Eligibility

The intent of this award is for ALS Canada and Brain Canada to support a promising postdoctoral fellow or Research Associate working at a Canadian institution to transition into an independent position contributing to ALS research. By the time of the funding start date, the applicant should be ready to transition within the next 2-3 years. The applicant must have a PhD; applicants with an MD are also eligible

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but need to explain why, based on their project and future career plans, the [Clinical Research Fellowship](#) is not the appropriate avenue to seek support from ALS Canada and Brain Canada. The postdoctoral portion may be carried out in the individual's current institution, or another institution approved by ALS Canada and Brain Canada. Non-Canadian citizens or permanent residents training in Canadian labs are eligible to apply, but if awarded, would need to demonstrate they are eligible to work/study in Canada for the duration of the requested funding. All applicants will have demonstrated contributions to research which may or may not have related directly to ALS but proposed future training must be ALS-related. The applicant, either at the postdoctoral or Research Associate level, must demonstrate clear evidence of independent research, showing intellectual contributions to research through his/her publication and presentation record.

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

Important Dates

- Call announced June 28, 2023
- Application deadline August 23, 2023 (1:00 pm ET)
- Notification of award November 2023
- Funding begins January 2024

Application Process

Complete applications should be submitted via email to the ALS Canada Research Team (research@als.ca), as a **single PDF file** by **1:00 pm ET on August 23, 2023**. Applicants should request delivery and read receipts. An email acknowledging receipt of the application will be sent.

Applications will need to be formatted using standard fonts (Calibri-11, Arial-11, or Times Roman -12), single-spaced, on a letter-size page with minimum margins of 0.5"/1.27 cm on all sides. The font size for figures and legends must be a minimum of 10 points. Use of a condensed font and spacing is not permitted. **It is the sole responsibility of the applicant to ensure their submission adheres to these requirements and is received before the deadline.**

Please submit your applications for review in the following order:

- 1) Cover page
- 2) Letter from the applicant (limit 2 pages)
- 3) Scientific summary/abstract (limit ½ page)

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- 4) Research plan (limit 3 pages)
- 5) Figures and Tables (optional, limit 1 page)
- 6) Budget for first year research allowance
- 7) Curriculum vitae of applicant (no page limit)
- 8) Curriculum vitae of proposed supervisor (limit 4 pages)

Additional items to be sent directly to research@als.ca:

- 9) Letter from the supervisor (limit 2 pages)
- 10) Additional letters of support (limit 2 pages each)

1) Cover page

Please note, this is provided as a fillable form page (Word Doc), [downloadable](#) from the ALS Canada website.

2) Letter from the applicant

The letter is the applicant's opportunity to explain to the reviewers why they should be chosen. Maximum **TWO** pages. Suggested material includes, but is not limited to:

- Previous training and how it relates to the present proposal
- Research goals, including a long-term vision for their intended line of research as a junior faculty
- Career goals
- Importance of their research proposal to the field of ALS research and the visions of ALS Canada and Brain Canada

3) Scientific summary/abstract

The abstract should be scientific and approximately one-half page in length describing the hypothesis, rationale, specific aims, and significance.

4) Research Plan

The research plan for the project to be carried out during the first two years of funding must not exceed the limit of **THREE** pages excluding bibliography. The research plan should include the following information:

- Rationale for the project
 - including hypothesis
- Specific aims
- Background
 - a comprehensive literature review is not expected. Please supply only the information that is required for reviewers, who are specialists in ALS and neurodegenerative disease, to understand the proposal

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-
- Preliminary data (if existing)
 - Experimental Plan
 - a clear and logical experimental plan that addresses the hypothesis and specific aims;
 - a description of how sex, gender, and/or other diversity considerations are taken into account in the research project, as applicable
 - Bibliography
 - include titles and all authors of the referenced articles; excluded from page limit

5) Figures and Tables (optional)

One page will be allowed for figures and/or tables which accompany the research plan (including preliminary data or information to support feasibility). This page may not be used for supplementary text.

6) Budget for first two years research allowance

Using the [template](#) provided, the budget should clearly itemize proposed use of the research allowance for the first two years (up to \$20,000/year) under appropriate categories. The budgetary allowance is intended to directly support the recipient's work outlined in the application and aimed at a path to independence from the supervisor. Funds should not be used to support the supervisor's lab and should be limited to consumable supplies required for the proposed research, fees for outsourced services and travel (up to \$2000 CAD per year). For any other items, sufficient justification must be made, outlining the necessity of the purchase for the path to independence. For questions about the eligibility of specific expenses, please contact research@als.ca.

Unauthorized expenses include:

- Personnel
- Equipment
- Any indirect costs including salaries or benefits to anyone other than the awardee, host laboratory overhead costs, etc.
- Insurance fees
- Purchase or rental of office equipment (laptop excepted – maximum \$1500)
- Membership or subscription dues
- Moving costs

7) Curriculum vitae of applicant

Applicants' CVs should include the following sections: Education and Training, Positions and Honours, Professional Activities and Awards, Peer-reviewed Publications and Poster/Oral Presentations. For all multi-authored publications, an indication of the applicant's contribution should be provided. Please do not submit CIHR Common CV. There is no page limit.

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8) Curriculum vitae of the supervisor

Supervisors' CVs should take the form of an NIH-style abbreviated biosketch, including the following sections: Education and Training, Positions and Honours, Research Focus (one paragraph), Professional Activities and Awards, Peer-reviewed Publications relevant to the proposal, and Research Funding (last five years). Maximum **FOUR** pages. Please do not submit CIHR Common CV.

9) Letter from the supervisor

The letter is the supervisor's opportunity to explain to the reviewers why the applicant should be chosen. Maximum **TWO** pages. Suggested material includes, but is not limited to:

- Research support available
- Applicant's qualifications and potential for independent research career
- Professional development plan for the applicant
- Institutional commitment (if applicable)

10) Additional letters of support

Two additional letters of support are required:

- Letter of support from another recognized faculty member familiar with the applicant
- Letter of support from an additional, recognized member of the ALS research community attesting to the quality of the applicant's proposed work and potential to impact the field as a Principal Investigator

Maximum **TWO** pages per letter. All letters must be sent directly to research@als.ca before the application deadline of 1:00 pm ET on August 23, 2023; otherwise, the application will be deemed incomplete.

Evaluation

Applications will be reviewed by a panel of experts, selected jointly by Brain Canada and ALS Canada. The composition of this review panel will include (but is not limited to) not-in-conflict member(s) of the Scientific & Medical Advisory Council (SMAC) of ALS Canada, additional members of the Canadian ALS research community, international ALS research experts, and non-ALS researchers with relevant expertise (as necessary).

Applications will first be reviewed and scored in written form, followed by an initial virtual meeting between review panel members to discuss applications and determine the finalists for interview. Reviewers will consider the merit of the applicant, the quality of the project, work to date, and the relevance of the work to ALS. Likelihood for success in obtaining or maintaining a faculty position will be strongly considered in the decision. Finalists will be notified and may be interviewed by the review panel, followed by a confidential panel discussion and scoring process.

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Post-panel discussion between the ALS Canada and Brain Canada Research Teams, CEOs, and observing Board member(s) will precede the recommendation to the Board of Directors for funding decisions.

All applicants will receive anonymized reviewers' comments and a summary of major discussion points from the ALS Canada VP Research, unless not discussed in detail at the meeting.

Conditions of the Award

1. Funds will be sent in instalments to the awardee's institution. Release of funds will be subject to receipt of relevant ethics approvals from the supervisor's institutional review committees, where necessary (for use of human subjects, research animals, or hazardous materials). Note, the awardee will be responsible for ensuring that relevant ethics approvals have been obtained at each participating institution. Significant changes in research aims or budget allocation requires a priori permission of ALS Canada and Brain Canada.
2. Annual progress reports are required. Year two funding will be dependent on a progress interview with an expert panel. A year two progress report will be required two weeks in advance of the interview. Year three funding at the faculty level is contingent upon receipt of a signed letter of offer from the institution where the faculty position will be held, as well as a progress report indicating successes leading to faculty position. Subsequent instalments will be contingent upon receipt of satisfactory scientific and financial reports. Please note that funding may be suspended or terminated following failure to produce such reports within the required timeframe.
3. A final progress report is due within 60 days of end date of the grant. Reporting templates will be provided by ALS Canada upon acceptance of the award. Reports will be evaluated by both ALS Canada and Brain Canada.
4. Funding is contingent upon compliance with the policies of ALS Canada and Brain Canada.
5. Budgetary overlap for the project with other funding provided by ALS Canada, Brain Canada, or another agency must be disclosed.
6. The intent of these grants is to fund research that will be in the open domain. All manuscripts, presentations, abstracts, etc. must acknowledge funding by ALS Canada, the Government of Canada (Health Canada), and Brain Canada. Funded researchers should make every effort to publish all findings related to the project and to acknowledge ALS Canada and Brain Canada in media events discussing research funded through this competition. Manuscripts or other presentations in press must be sent to the VP Research of ALS Canada upon acceptance for publication. ALS Canada should also be notified as soon as possible of media events related to the project, and ALS Canada will relay this information to Brain Canada.

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7. Awardees are required to inform the VP Research of ALS Canada of significant difficulties, availability of resources, additional funding sources, or changes to the experimental plan throughout the term of the grant.
8. For the purposes of advocating the missions of ALS Canada and Brain Canada, it is expected that funded researchers will actively engage with, or on behalf of, ALS Canada and/or Brain Canada when requested.
9. To encourage collaboration and increase the visibility of ALS researchers, ALS Canada is establishing an official national research network. Once established, participation and registration in this network will be required in order to receive new or continuing funding from ALS Canada. Funded researchers will be expected to make every effort to attend the annual ALS Canada Research Forum as a sponsored invitee and will be encouraged to present their project upon request.

Questions and Additional Information

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