



Parkinson Canada

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Issued By

Parkinson Canada

NEW INVESTIGATOR AWARD PROGRAM

(2024 - 2027 Cycle)

Release Date:	September 15, 2013
Application Deadline (Online Receipt):	December 5, 2023 (11:59pm EST)
Notifications of Awards:	March 2024
Funding Start Date:	August 1, 2024
Duration of Award:	3 years

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Important Changes to the 2024-2025 Competition

1. Research Priority Area: Canadian Open Parkinson Network (C-OPN)
 - For this research cycle only, Parkinson Canada has earmarked up to \$200,000 of the Annual Research Competition budget for projects submitted to the competition that use data from the C-OPN Database, Registry and/or Biobank. More details are provided below.
2. Addition of a New Impact Statement
 - All applications will now include an Impact Statement. This is a description of how this project will move the field forward and contribute to new scientific knowledge in Parkinson's, how it aligns with the Research Themes of Parkinson Canada, how findings from the project will impact the lives of people with Parkinson's.
3. Addition of a Patient Involvement Statement
 - Applications will also include a description of how people affected by Parkinson's will be involved in the project, if applicable. This can include recruitment for clinical, population

health or qualitative studies, and/or how individuals may be involved in study design and knowledge translation or dissemination considerations.

4. Introduction of Weighted Scoring Criteria

- To ensure fairness and consistency in the review process, weighted scoring will be applied such that all Pilot Project Grant applications will be evaluated on the bases of the following: Candidate (30%), Project Novelty and Feasibility (30%), Proposed Budget & Lab Performance (20%), and Impact of Project (20%).

5. Lived Experience Reviews

- Lived experience expert reviewers will review the following sections from submitted applications: 1) the non-scientific summary, 2) the impact statement and 3) the patient involvement statement.

6. New Budget Templates

- To standardize budget submissions for all Pilot Project Grant applicants, budget templates (excel spreadsheet format) will now be provided on the Parkinson Canada website and in SMAApply, and completion of the template will be required for all applications. completion of the **Applications that do not use the provided budget template will be disqualified from the competition.**

BACKGROUND

Parkinson Canada is pleased to present the New Investigator Award Program (the “Program”) as part of its revitalized Research Grant Program. Parkinson Canada offers this strategic initiative to provide investigators with an early opportunity, upon completing his or her research training, to develop and demonstrate his or her ability to initiate and conduct independent health research, as typically expected of university faculty members. Parkinson Canada anticipates that in the initial period of their independent careers, new investigators are in a good position to formulate innovative and fertile research projects. The Program is offered specifically to university faculty applicants who are currently in the **first five years** of their career as research scientists in Canada. An applicant will typically have completed one or two periods of post-doctoral training and will have a staff appointment that allows the applicant an opportunity to initiate and direct his or her own independent lines of research. The Program provides new researchers with an opportunity to enter into the area of Parkinson’s research, without having to compete with established researchers for grant monies. Parkinson Canada wishes to encourage continued growth and revitalization in the field of Parkinson’s research in Canada by supporting individual researchers in their professional development.

Parkinson Canada intends to provide awards for the support of projects with funding of up to **\$45,000 per year over a three-year term** to outstanding applicants who meet the eligibility criteria of the Program and who have been approved by its Scientific Advisory Council (the “Advisory Council”). Funds awarded under the Program are to be used to cover operating expenses, technical support staff salaries and equipment costs for research grants in Parkinson’s-related areas.

Parkinson Canada invites grant applications (“Applications”) from applicants committed to conducting research in areas relevant to the cure, cause, prevention, improved treatment and/or understanding of Parkinson’s disease, other related disorders including: Multiple System Atrophy (MSA), Progressive Supranuclear Palsy (PSP), other Parkinson’s conditions and its implications on society. Parkinson Canada encourages Applications from the fields of biomedicine, health services and systems research, population studies, and clinical research.

The Program is available to individuals who propose to conduct research on the biomedical, clinical, health services and systems and population areas of Parkinson’s. Parkinson Canada plans to adopt a flexible framework in funding awards under the Program.

RESEARCH THEMES OF PARKINSON CANADA

Parkinson Canada provides funding to support research projects that are aligned with the identified research themes which have the highest potential impact for the health and well-being of people with Parkinson's. Applications are encouraged to focus on novel and innovative research in the following areas:

- 1) **Symptomatic Treatments:** treatments that ease outward symptoms of Parkinson's (e.g., medications for tremors).
- 2) **Disease Modifying Therapies & Treatments:** treatments that target the underlying mechanisms of Parkinson's to interfere with disease progression.
- 3) **Prevention:** interventions aimed at reducing the risk or severity of Parkinson's Disease.
- 4) **Diagnosis & Progression:** understanding predictors of Parkinson's for earlier diagnosis and intervention (e.g. biomarkers).
- 5) **Causes of Parkinson's (and related symptoms):** understanding the physiological processes that lead to Parkinson's and its symptoms (ex. alpha-synuclein aggregation).
- 6) **Living Well with Parkinson's:** improving the quality of life (QoL) of people living with Parkinson's and understanding the barriers to positive QoL.

FUNDS AVAILABLE

The Program offers awards for the support of projects with budgets of up to \$45,000 per year over a three-year term to exceptional applicants who have been approved for funding by the Advisory Council.

RESEARCH PRIORITY AREA: CANADIAN OPEN PARKINSON NETWORK (C-OPN)

For this year's competition, Parkinson Canada has earmarked up to \$200,000 from the overall competition budget for meritorious projects (open to all active competitions) that make strong use of the datasets and resources from the **Canadian Open Parkinson Network (C-OPN)**. To date, C-OPN has enrolled over >1500 Parkinson's patients from participating sites across Canada. From these participants, rich datasets (demographic, epidemiological and clinical information) and biological samples (DNA, PBMC and Serum) have been collected for further testing (additional information can be found online <http://copn-rpco.ca/research> or by email: national.manager@copn-rpco.ca). Applications will be submitted to the general research competition and will follow the same timeline, evaluation procedure, and general policy guidelines.

ELIGIBILITY

Parkinson Canada is committed to supporting the most advanced and/or highest quality of Parkinson's research in Canada. Applications will be accepted from applicants who meet the eligibility criteria established by Parkinson Canada (as summarized in this Request for Applications).

If you currently hold another Parkinson Canada grant as a PI or Co-PI or have pending final reports from a Parkinson Canada grant or award you are not eligible to apply. Individuals wishing to be involved in an application proposal must be listed as collaborators.

Applicants must hold an MD or PhD degree (or equivalent degree) and be graduates of a university recognized by Parkinson Canada. Applicants must be university faculty members with a position ranking of Associate Professor or less, in the first five years of their career, and must be conducting research for the following institutions and organizations (an "Approved Institution"):

- Canadian post-secondary institutions and their affiliated institutions including hospitals and research institutes; or
- Other equivalent organizations, as determined by the Research Policy Committee of the Board of Parkinson Canada in consultation with the Advisory Council, provided that the applicant's research or research-related activities fall within the mandate of Parkinson Canada.

Applicants must be able to clearly demonstrate their potential to become an independent investigator during a period of supervised research. Parkinson Canada expects that the applicant is within 5 years of obtaining an independent faculty position at a university **at the time of application deadline**.

Leaves of absence will be taken into consideration in calculating the 5 years eligibility criteria. Applicants must state the reasoning for the leave of absence.

Applicants in junior faculty positions outside of Canada and scientists transferring into the fields of Parkinson's research from another field are both eligible for this award but are subject to the same eligibility criteria established by Parkinson Canada for other eligible candidates and described in this Request for Applications.

The applicant must be responsible for the intellectual direction of the proposed research, and must be willing and able to assume administrative and financial responsibility for any funds awarded under the Program.

Applicants are prohibited from receiving the payment of a salary, stipend, honorarium, or any similar form of compensation from any Parkinson Canada grant. Post-doctoral, fellows or trainees are not eligible to apply for funding under this Program. Applicants seeking a fellowship to support trainees at a post-doctoral level or clinical level should refer to the Parkinson Canada Fellowship Program.

REVIEW CRITERIA

The principal consideration used to evaluate Applications is research excellence potential. There are, however, a variety of additional criteria that may be considered by the Advisory Council in the evaluation process. Each of the criteria listed below will be considered in assigning the overall ranking of the Application, weighting them as indicated for each Application.

Candidate (30%)

- Does the applicant have a strong training and publication history in the area of the proposed research?
- Does the applicant show the potential to become a leader in the field of Parkinson's Disease Research? Does the applicant show promise of significantly advancing biomedical or clinical research in the area of Parkinson's disease?

Project Novelty & Feasibility (30%)

- Does the project employ novel concepts, approaches, or methods? Are the project's objectives original and innovative? Does the project challenge existing paradigms or develop new methodologies or technologies?
- Are the applicant's conceptual framework, design, methods, and analyses adequately developed, well integrated, and appropriate? Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternative tactics?

Proposed Budget & Lab Performance (20%)

- Is the proposed budget reasonable and adequately justified in the application? Will the proposed budget be sufficient to carry out the research to address the project's scientific aims?
- Is the scientific environment (including personnel and trainees who will be involved in the project) likely to contribute to the project's probability of success?
- Is there evidence of institutional support of this project?

Impact of Project (20%)

- Does the project contribute to Canada's leadership potential in Parkinson's knowledge in that field? Where does this work position itself in relation to world knowledge of Parkinson's at this time?
- Will the project advance the understanding of Parkinson's and move the field forward?
- If successful, do the specific objectives of the project lead to measurable improvements in the lives of people affected by Parkinson's?

In addition to the above criteria all applications will also be reviewed with respect to the following:

- Applicants must clarify any overlap or potential overlap with currently funded projects.
- The adequacy of the proposed protection of humans, animals, or of the environment, to the extent that they may be adversely affected by the project proposed in the application. The Advisory Council will also examine the provisions for the protection of human subjects (if any) and the safety of the research environment.

Note that the Application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have major scientific or social impact and thus deserving of a high priority score.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

This Request for Applications made by Parkinson Canada is subject to the terms and conditions (the "Terms and Conditions") contained in Parkinson Canada's Research Program Application Guidelines (the "Guidelines"), which the applicant shall be deemed to have accepted upon submission to Parkinson Canada of an Application to participate in the Program.

Failure to comply with the Terms and Conditions may result, in addition to any other remedies Parkinson Canada may have at law, in termination of the Program and exclusion of the applicant from future grant and fellowship award competitions.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND TERMS OF FUNDING

All successful applicants shall comply with the reporting obligations outlined in the Guidelines.

Parkinson Canada requires grant recipients to submit Annual and Final Progress Reports, as well as a Financial Summary detailing the use of the funds awarded under the Program. The advance of the portion of the award to be made in the second year of the term of the Program is conditional upon submission of a progress report to Parkinson Canada in substance and form satisfactory to the Advisory Council at the end of the first year of the term of the Program.

The Progress report shall be submitted to the Parkinson Canada Research Department (research@parkinson.ca) no later than **one year after the start of the award**. Progress report guidelines and instructions will be provided by Parkinson Canada in advance of the report deadline.

The Final Report must describe the results of the successful applicant's project and the Financial Summary must detail the use of the funds under the Program. These reports shall be submitted by the successful applicant to Parkinson Canada substance and form satisfactory to the Advisory Council. The Final Progress Report and the Financial Summary shall be submitted to the Parkinson Canada Research Department (research@parkinson.ca) **no later than three months after the termination of the two-year term of the Program.**

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Applications are submitted online through the Parkinson Canada online application system called SMAApply. It can be accessed through the following link which is also available on the Parkinson Canada website at <https://parkinsoncan.smapply.io/>. **The deadline to submit applications is December 5, 2023 (11:59 pm EST). Applications received after this time will not be considered and will be disqualified from the competition. There will be no exceptions.**

Applications for New Investigator Awards include the following:

Important note on document formatting: When preparing your application, all application documents to be uploaded must have page margins of **1 inch minimum (2.54 cm)** and use **12-point font** (Times New Roman, Arial or Calibri). Failing to follow these instructions may negatively impact the evaluation of your application and could lead to it being withdrawn.

1. **Project Summary:** Please state in **500 words or less** the scientific or clinical question being asked, the methods you will use to address it, and the expected outcome. *(To save space, you do not need to include basic information such as the description of Parkinson's disease)*
2. **Non-Scientific Summary:** Please state in **500 words or less** a plain language summary of the project to be reviewed by people affected by Parkinson's who will serve as Lived Experience Expert reviewers. The summary should include a description of the issue the research project is addressing, methods the researcher has chosen to address this problem, and expected findings.
3. **Impact Statement:** Please state in **500 words or less** a plain language description of how this project aligns with the Research Themes of Parkinson Canada (outlined above), how the findings from this project will impact the lives of people with Parkinson's, and how this project will push forward the Parkinson's Research field. This section will be reviewed by people affected by Parkinson's who will serve as Lived Experience Expert Reviewers.
4. **Patient Involvement Statement:** Please state in **150 words or less** how people affected by Parkinson's will be involved in the project, how they will be recruited if applicable, and how they may be involved in informing study design and knowledge translation or dissemination considerations.
5. **Project Narrative: (five (5) pages max),** including:
 - **Background** of proposed studies
 - **Specific objectives** of the proposed studies
 - Applicants are encouraged to emphasize the novelty & innovation of the project objectives, and the high-risk/high-reward nature of the project.
 - **Details of proposed experiment,** including methods and procedures
 - If the project will use **C-OPN**, and would like to be considered for the Research Priority Funding please provide adequate description.
 - Describe how the findings from this project may lead to major future studies.

Note: The five-page limit applies only to the project narrative and does not include estimated budgets, references, biographical information, ethical approvals or other support documents.

6. Budget:

- Using the **budget template** (Excel spreadsheet) provided on the application website show all significant aspects of the project such as salaries (trainees and support staff), equipment, materials & supplies, services, and knowledge translation. Equipment costs in budgets will be allowable up to 20% of the total budget and travel costs for presentation of research findings will be allowed up to a maximum of \$1500. Parkinson Canada will not fund institutional overhead costs.
- A separate **budget justification document** (max 0.5 page) will be required to and must include sufficient detail on the proposed budget, to allow reviewers to make judgements about the amount of funds necessary to allow the project to proceed.
- Note: If >75% of the proposed budget is allocated for trainee salaries (PhD, Postdoc, or Clinical Fellow), we strongly encourage the applicant to have their trainees apply to the appropriate Parkinson Canada Research Programs for trainee salary support (Graduate Student Award, Postdoctoral Research Fellowship, or Clinician Scientist Research Fellowship).

7. **Biographical information** of the applicant (using the Parkinson Canada biographical sketch form).
8. **Letters of Recommendation:** Three (3) letters of recommendation from professors or instructors under whom the applicant has taken training. The letters of recommendation must include evaluations of the applicant specific to this award.
9. **Letter of Mentorship:** Applicants are strongly encouraged to include a letter of mentorship with their application. The letter should state among other information that the writer has read the application and will provide assistance to the applicant.
10. **Relevant and reasonable support materials**, including but not limited to photographs, tables, assessment scales figures, literature references, letters of collaboration, appendices, and publications may be included.
11. **Signature of applicant** and an authorized signing official of the applicant's host institution.

Additional information if applicable

- If a version of the present application has been submitted previously to Parkinson Canada, but was not funded, provide a response to the comments of previous reviewers. The response should stand alone, i.e. no required reference to any other documents, including the previous application.
- If funding has been received from Parkinson Canada within the past five (5) years, please indicate whether you were able to publish / present the results of your research or leverage funding for other grants (maximum 500 words).
- An explanation of any interruption in the applicant's academic career.

Applications may be submitted in either English or French, and French-speaking reviewers will be made available for any applications that are submitted in French. French-speaking applicants may also ask to have any application guides and materials translated into French.. For more information please contact research@parkinson.ca.

All applications must be submitted via our online application system (SMApplly - <https://parkinsoncan.smapply.io/>). Please retain copies of all application documents in case there are any issues accessing application files.

Any applications in violation of these guidelines are subject to disqualification at the discretion of the Advisory Council

Important note on document formatting: When preparing your application, all application documents to be uploaded must have page margins of **1 inch minimum (2.54 cm)** and use **12-point font** (Times New Roman, Arial or Calibri). Failing to follow these instructions may negatively impact the evaluation of your application and could lead to it being disqualified.

Incomplete applications or applications received later than **December 5, 2023 (11:59pm EST)** will not be considered under any circumstances.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE REFER TO:

The Parkinson Canada Research Program Application Guidelines Manual available from the Parkinson Canada Web site at www.parkinson.ca.

OR CONTACT:

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