

Funding by:



ALS CANADA
RESEARCH PROGRAM



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Foundation



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Terms of Reference: ALS Canada-Brain Canada Discovery Grant Program 2026

Overview

The purpose of the 2026 Discovery Grant Program is to invest in high-impact projects focused on: **a)** identifying causes of, or treatments for, ALS and/or related neurological diseases, including primary lateral sclerosis, progressive muscular atrophy, and ALS/FTLD (frontotemporal lobar dementia), or **b)** advancing research aimed at maximizing function, minimizing disability, and optimizing quality of life through symptom management and support for individuals or families living with ALS. Examples include, but are not limited to, management of secretions and cramps, psychological interventions to address mental health issues, nutritional interventions, respiratory care, engineering applications to reduce physical limitations, and programs to address the needs of caregivers. These priorities align with ALS Canada's vision of "A world free of ALS" and its strategic goal of leading Canada's contribution to global ALS research.

The Discovery Grant Program supports collaborative projects and encourages multidisciplinary teams, particularly those that bring together individuals from outside the field who can combine their expertise in innovative ways. It also aims to provide successful, preliminary data-driven ideas with opportunities for larger, multi-year funding, ideally leading to translational programs that will bring us closer to a world free of ALS.

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 whose work is powered by generous donors who share our vision of a world free of 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 25 years, 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 institutions,

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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 increase support of brain research on behalf of Canadians, 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 those who suffer from brain disorders.

www.braincanada.ca

Funding

The Discovery Grant Program consists of two streams, designed to support a modest pipeline of ideas and further development. A total funding pool of **\$1,500,000** will be utilized with flexible allocation across these streams. The distribution of grants between the two streams will depend on the quality of applications and the results of peer review. Both streams seek innovative research approaches, supported by sound rationale and a feasible experimental plan.

The Seed Grant (Stream 1) is designed to nurture novel ideas by providing support for obtaining preliminary data or pursuing ideas supported by early data signals. Although preliminary data may enhance competitiveness, it is not necessarily required. Applicants may request **\$125,000** for research projects over a two-year period. This stream emphasizes high-risk, high-reward research. Projects initially funded through the Seed Grant stream that generate promising preliminary data may serve as a foundation for future applications to the Development Grant stream.

The Development Grant (Stream 2) aims to support projects that build on a strong foundation of preliminary data, driving towards eventual translation to human impact. Given the highly competitive and underfunded nature of federal multi-year operating grants in Canada, prioritizing ALS within a single lab or clinical research strategy can be challenging. Applicants may request **\$500,000** for research projects over a three-year period. These grants are designed to support teams with a collaborative and translational vision, contributing to long-term progress in the field.

Given the larger funding amount available for Development Grants, the project's place within the applicant's overall ALS research program will be considered. Investigators without an established ALS research program are still eligible to apply but must clearly outline their intention to advance elements of the project beyond this funding. Newly proposed ideas from investigators outside the field will typically utilize the Seed Grant for high-risk, high-reward applications.

For either stream, funds must be used to cover the direct costs of the research project for which they were awarded and should be directly attributable to it. Indirect or overhead costs are not eligible.

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Additionally, no more than 50% of the award funds can be allocated to research expenses incurred outside of Canada. Alternative award durations can be requested by the Principal Investigator (PI), but accelerated spending must be well-justified.

ALS Canada and Brain Canada do not seek ownership or vested interest in intellectual property arising from funded research projects. The joint research program is solely dedicated to advancing the global understanding of ALS and/or related neurological diseases and developing therapeutic avenues to slow disease progression. ALS Canada and Brain Canada support the intellectual property policies of the host institutions where award funds are disseminated.

Eligibility

A lead investigator (Principal Investigator, or PI) must be named to assume the administrative and financial responsibilities. The lead investigator's institution will serve as the host institution for the grant and will receive funding disbursements from Brain Canada. The PI must hold an independent academic position and be conducting research at a qualifying Canadian institution for the full duration of the grant, as defined by [CIHR guidelines](#). Eligible individuals typically hold the rank of assistant, associate, full professor, or equivalent. They must be able to initiate and direct independent lines of research as a principal investigator; assume full responsibility for managing their laboratories; maintain full control over their research funds; and be permitted to supervise trainees (if applicable, as per institutional policy).

For both streams, at least one additional co-investigator from a different institution or a distinct research group within the same institution is required. Each co-investigator must be an independent researcher who holds a PhD or equivalent, or a health professional degree (MD, OT, PT, etc.). Clinical researchers should have completed residency training that includes research experience, or they should have previous research experience.

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.

For clinical research applications submitted through option b) outlined in the Overview, the Principal Investigator must hold a degree recognized by a professional order with experience treating or working with people living with ALS. Allied professionals are encouraged to apply, but those without an academic position will need a PI on their team that meets the criteria above.

Applicants may submit only one application to the Development Grant stream. However, applicants may submit more than one application to the Seed Grant stream, provided the proposed projects are sufficiently distinct and there is no overlap in funding. Applications submitted to either stream must be

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entirely independent, meaning results or experiments from one project cannot be used to inform the other, either within or across streams.

The Discovery Grant Program is not intended to support the work of other funding agencies. In such cases, please reach out to the ALS Canada Research Team at research@als.ca to discuss potential partnership opportunities.

Applicants must be able to initiate the project in January 2027, when funding begins. In situations where institutional oversight or contracts with independent parties are required to begin operations (such as Research Ethics Board approvals, etc.), the applicant's action to prompt these processes must be initiated before this date.

Important Dates

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Call announced | May 13, 2026 |
| • Application deadline | July 3, 2026 (1:00 PM ET) |
| • Notification of award | November 2026 |
| • Funding begins | January 2027 |

Application Process

Complete applications should be submitted as a **single PDF file** via email to the ALS Canada Research Team (research@als.ca) by **1:00 PM ET on July 3, 2026**. Applicants should request delivery and read receipts. An email acknowledging receipt of the application will be sent.

Applications must be formatted using standard fonts (Calibri 11, Arial 11, or Times New Roman 12), single-spaced, on letter-size pages 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 applicant's sole responsibility to ensure their submission meets these requirements and is received before the deadline.**

Please submit your applications for review in the following order:

1) Cover page

2) Abstract (scientific) (limit: ½ page)

3) Lay Summary (limit: 300 words)

4) Research Plan

- Seed Grant (limit: 6 pages)
- Development Grant (limit: 8 pages)

5) Integration into the ALS landscape (limit: 1 page)

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- Seed Grant – path forward for follow-on funding and, if applicable, integration within an ALS program
- Development Grant – integration within an ALS program, longer-term vision for the project

6) Figures and Tables

- Seed Grant (limit: 3 pages)
- Development Grant (limit: 4 pages)

7) Bibliography

8) Proposed Budget and Justification

9) Curriculum Vitae (PI & Co-investigator(s); see below for format) (limit: 5 pages per CV)

10) Supporting Documents

11) Institutional Approvals (limit: ½ page)

12) Other funding currently held or applied for

13) Yield from previous ALS-specific funding (if applicable) (limit: 1 page)

14) Explanations of significant delay (optional)

15) Excluded reviewers (optional)

1) Cover page

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

2) Abstract

The abstract should be scientific and approximately one-half page in length, describing the hypothesis, rationale, specific aims, and significance with respect to identifying causes and/or treatments for ALS or the proposed project's impact on quality-of-life management for individuals living with ALS.

3) Lay Summary

Up to 300 words maximum. For successful applicants, the information in this section may be used in communication materials distributed to people affected by ALS, donors, the general public, and other key stakeholders. Please ensure that the lay summary is written in an easily understandable style for individuals without a scientific background.

4) Research Plan

For both streams, the research plan should be organized under the following headings, adhering to the format described above (Seed Grant: SIX pages maximum; Development Grant: EIGHT pages maximum).

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a) Rationale

- Statement of the hypothesis and objectives (aims) of the proposed research.

b) Significance

- Describe the significance of the proposed project in identifying causes of or developing treatments for ALS, emphasizing what is novel and exciting about the research plan.

c) Background

- A comprehensive literature review is not expected. Please provide only the information necessary for reviewers, who are specialists in ALS and related neurological diseases, to understand the proposal.

d) Preliminary Results

- **Seed Grant:** If applicable, this information can be provided in the Rationale or Experimental Plan, or here as a separate section.
- **Development Grant:** Describe any data or observations that directly support the hypothesis/research objectives or show promising results.

e) Experimental Plan

- Due to space constraints, emphasize the description and justification of the general methodology to be used to test the hypothesis or achieve the research objectives.

f) Research Environment and Collaborators/Co-investigators

- Describe how the research environment, strategic collaborations, and anticipated personnel will provide the necessary resources and support to execute the proposed project.
- **Seed Grant:** Focus on the general environment and collaborative framework.
- **Development Grant:** Delineate the involvement of formal co-investigators.

Understanding sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, ethnic and socioeconomic status, and/or other determinants of health, and how they interact with other determinants can help to ensure that research projects lead to better outcomes and are beneficial for all people living in Canada. Applicants are encouraged to consult the [CIHR Online Training Modules](#) for Integrating Sex & Gender in Health Research.

Please describe how relevant determinants of health will be integrated into the research question, analysis, results, and reporting.

5) Integration into ALS landscape

Seed Grant – On ONE page, describe how you envision advancing this research within the broader ALS ecosystem. Explain the potential significance of the anticipated results and how they might open new

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directions for inquiry or lay the groundwork for future studies. Discuss how you plan to build on the findings, including potential sources of future funding (beyond the Development Grant stream) and opportunities for collaboration. Applicants are encouraged to consider how their work could engage with the wider ALS research, advocacy, and lived experience communities. Please also include a brief knowledge mobilization strategy to outline how you will share and disseminate results, through channels such as presentations, workshops, publications, or other forms of outreach.

Development Grant – On ONE page, describe an anticipated downstream translational plan, should the anticipated results be achieved. Outline how the results may be advanced toward clinical application or broader utility in the ALS ecosystem. Indicate how the project fits within your existing or emerging research or care program, and how it may enhance or expand your lab's or clinic's overall ALS program. Applicants are encouraged to describe planned collaborations, dissemination activities (e.g., presentations, meetings, or publications), and how the work will be positioned to maximize impact beyond the scope of the funded project – both within the research ecosystem, and ultimately, for people living with ALS.

6) Figures and Tables

A maximum of THREE additional pages for the Seed Grant or FOUR additional pages for the Development Grant are allowed for figures and/or tables accompanying the research plan (e.g., preliminary data or information to support feasibility). These pages may not be used for supplementary text. Figures and tables should not be interwoven within the text of the Research Plan.

7) Bibliography

The research plan should be properly referenced, using a format that includes the title of the reference. The bibliography is not included in the total page count.

8) Proposed Budget and Justification

Using the [Seed Grant template](#) or [Development Grant template](#) provided, the budget should clearly itemize the proposed use of project funds under appropriate categories, consistent with CIHR-approved expenditures: personnel, laboratory equipment, consumable supplies, laboratory animals, other (including service contracts, service charges, publication costs, etc.). Indirect or overhead costs are not eligible under these grants. Applicants to the Seed Grant stream can decide whether funds will be distributed to co-investigators, while Development Grant funds are expected to be distributed among co-investigators.

A detailed budget justification should be submitted with the itemized budget, explaining the proposed costs for each major category. If an accelerated duration for the award is requested by the PI, please use this section to include a brief justification for the accelerated spending and timeline, demonstrating that the funds can be used within the requested timeframe.



9) Curriculum Vita(e)

The curriculum vitae of the Principal Investigator and Co-Investigator(s) must be provided. Please do not submit the Canadian Common CV. Instead, 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 within the last five years and research outputs stemming from this funding. Maximum of FIVE pages per CV. CVs are required only for formal Co-Investigators. Collaborators are not required to submit their CVs as part of the application.

10) Supporting Documents

- a) Letters of collaboration or support from colleagues who will provide resources critical to the research project should be included, if applicable, to demonstrate the feasibility of the proposed research plan.
- b) For applications considered as resubmissions from previous competitions, applicants may provide up to ONE page outlining a response to previous reviews. Peer reviewers will be provided previous reviews to evaluate responses and assess any necessary improvements.

11) Institutional Approvals

Applicants should outline the anticipated institutional approvals (e.g., Research Ethics Board, Animal Care, Biosafety, Institutional Contracts) required for the proposed research (1/2 page maximum). This section should describe which approvals will be in place by the application deadline (if any), the anticipated timeline for any additional approvals required, and any known risks of delay and how they will be managed. Documentation is not required at this stage, but all applicable institutional approvals must be in place prior to the release of funds.

12) Other funding currently held or applied for

Please submit a list of currently held or pending funding and clearly indicate any overlap with your proposal. If multiple applications are being submitted to the Discovery Grant Program, include a brief description of how those applications differ from this one.

13) Yield from previous ALS-specific funding (if applicable)

Please list up to five previous ALS-specific grants or awards received, starting with the most recent (ONE page maximum). For each grant or award, provide up to three bullet points summarizing key accomplishments yielded from the support. Accomplishments should prioritize peer reviewed publications but may also include other notable research outputs, collaborations, or advancements. This section will be used to assess research outcomes from previous funding. Applicants with no previous ALS-specific funding will not be penalized.

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14) Explanations of significant delay (optional)

Applicants may provide a brief explanation (1/2 page maximum) for any justifiable delays that reviewers should consider when assessing accomplishments. Examples include, but are not limited to, parental leave or significant illness.

15) Excluded reviewers (optional)

Applicants may identify up to two individuals to be excluded as reviewers.

Evaluation

Applications will be reviewed, scored, and ranked by an International Peer Review Panel comprising basic and clinician scientists with expertise in ALS and/or related neurological diseases. Streams will be reviewed and ranked separately, so applicants should carefully consider the most suitable stream for their project. A recommended funding scenario, based on the pool of available funds, will be provided by the International Peer Review Panel.

Panel members and future chairs are selected by the current Panel Chair, the VP Research at ALS Canada, the chair of the Scientific and Medical Advisory Council of ALS Canada, a Brain Canada representative, and are approved by the board of ALS Canada. Grants will be assessed on their scientific merit and feasibility, impact on ALS research or care, team and environment, and integration into the broader ALS landscape.

Additional external reviewers may be solicited to address specific expertise gaps or balance the workload of the Panel members. These external reviewers will provide ratings and detailed comments to inform discussions during the Panel the meeting.

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 Research Team, unless the application was not discussed in detail at the meeting.

Conditions of the Award

1. Funds will be sent in instalments to the lead PI's institution. Release of funds will be subject to receipt of relevant ethics approvals from the lead PI's institutional review committees, where necessary (for use of human subjects, research animals, or hazardous materials). Note, the lead PI will be responsible for ensuring that relevant ethics approvals have been obtained at each participating institution. No-cost extensions are possible, pending approval by ALS Canada and Brain Canada. Significant changes in research aims or budget allocation requires a priori permission of ALS Canada and Brain Canada.



2. Annual progress reports are required, which will include a scientific report, due within 30 days of the anniversary of the project start date, and an institutional financial statement, due within 60 days of the anniversary of the project start date. Subsequent instalments will be contingent upon receipt of satisfactory scientific progress and financial reports. Please note that funding may be suspended or terminated following failure to produce such reports within the required timeframe. 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.
3. Funding is contingent upon compliance with the policies of ALS Canada and Brain Canada.
4. Budgetary overlap for the project with other funding provided by ALS Canada, Brain Canada, or another agency must be disclosed. Funding is granted on the condition that team members are not in receipt of other funds for the same project during the term of the grant. The Host Institution and Principal Investigator must disclose any overlapping funding both prior to and during the funding period. If such overlap occurs, the grant amount may be adjusted accordingly.
5. ALS Canada and Brain Canada encourage that all manuscripts should be published in an open access format. 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. Where possible, notifications to both ALS Canada and Brain Canada in advance of media opportunities are appreciated.
6. 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.
7. 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. This may include scientific and/or lay presentations to various audiences including the ALS community.
8. Funded researchers will be expected to make every effort to attend ALS Canada events and will be encouraged to present their project upon request.

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Questions and Additional Information

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