



Parkinson Canada

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Issued By

Parkinson Canada

NEW INVESTIGATOR AWARD

(2025 Cycle)

Release Date:	September 3, 2024
Application Deadline (Online Receipt):	November 1, 2024 (5:00pm EST)
Notifications of Awards:	March-April 2025
Funding Start Date:	August 1, 2025
Duration of Award:	3 years

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Important Changes to the 2024-2025 Competition

- Project Impact Statement:** All applications will now include a Project Impact Statement. This is a broad-ranging general language description of: a) background information on the field of research, b) your specific hypothesis, c) the chosen methodology, d) potential future impact of project findings towards the lives of Canadians with Parkinson's.
- Lived Experience Reviewer Scoring:** Lived experience reviewers (Parkinson's patients and care partners) will be assigned to each application. They will review the Project Impact Statement and Patient Engagement Statement, and their score will count for 10% of the total application score.
- Advisory Group:** A new advisory group consisting of past lived experience reviewers has been established this year. We plan to arrange for 2-3 virtual meetings in October where applicants can consult with Advisory Group members to give feedback on various aspects of their application: i)

design of clinical studies to improve the participant experience, ii) choosing study aims that maximize potential impact to the lives of people with Parkinson's, and iii) encouraging knowledge dissemination activities for the patient community.

4. **EDIJ Self-identification Questionnaire:** Parkinson Canada is committed to advancing the principles of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Justice throughout the organization. We are asking all applicants to complete a self-identification questionnaire on SMAApply, as a first step to better understand the demographics of our applicant pool and of our grant recipients.

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 projects across all fields of research related to Parkinson's Disease. The following Research Themes (described below) have been developed for the purposes of internal tracking and reporting broadly on our research funding history and trends. In your application, you will be asked to choose a primary Research Theme which aligns with your project.

- 1) **Symptomatic Treatments:** treatments that ease outward symptoms of Parkinson's (e.g., medications for tremors).

- 2) **Disease Modifying Therapies:** treatments that target the underlying mechanisms of Parkinson's to interfere with disease progression (E.g. medical interventions targeting α -Synuclein aggregates).
- 3) **Diagnosis & Risk Factors:** understanding risk factors and predictors of Parkinson's for earlier diagnosis and intervention (e.g. biomarkers, genetic studies, etc.).
- 4) **Causes of Parkinson's:** understanding the physiological processes that lead to Parkinson's and its symptoms (ex. alpha-synuclein aggregation, mitochondrial dysfunction, etc.).
- 5) **Living Well with Parkinson's:** interventions, technologies, and programs to improve the quality of life (QoL) for people affected by Parkinson's and studies to understand barriers to better QoL (E.g. diet and exercise interventions).

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.

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. **Applications that do not use the provided budget template will be disqualified from the competition.**

To encourage researchers to use the Canadian Open Parkinson Network (C-OPN), an **additional \$5,000** may be requested by applicants to the Pilot Project Grant that plan to leverage C-OPN datasets and resources in their project. The applicant must make adequate justification for these additional funds in the project narrative and the budget justification documents. C-OPN has enrolled over >2000 Parkinson's patients from participating sites across Canada (to date). 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).

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.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND JUSTICE (EDIJ)

Parkinson Canada is committed to advancing the principles of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Justice throughout the organization. In the 2025 Research Competition, we are asking all applicants to complete a self-identification questionnaire, as a first step to better understand the demographics of our applicant pool and of our grant recipients.

We are complying with the highest standards of privacy and security to ensure that this deeply personal information is collected and stored in a secure manner. Our self-identification questionnaire closely mirrors the form used by federal funding agencies (E.g. CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC), and covers the same demographic dimensions. We are asking that all applicants to our research competition complete the questionnaire, but an applicant can choose the option "I prefer not to answer" for any question where they don't feel comfortable sharing information.

The information from these self-identification questionnaires will only be accessed and reviewed after all applications have been fully reviewed and funding recommendations are completed, to ensure that this information will not be used to make any funding decisions. This personal information will only be reviewed by 1-2 staff members who have been trained in EDIJ principles.

All collected answers will be transferred into a de-identified aggregated format for internal review of our grant programs and to identify any major gaps where we are not reaching or attracting research applicants from historically underrepresented groups. We also promise that any data that we share with the public or key stakeholders from these findings will be in this de-identified aggregated format to protect the identity of individuals who have shared their personal information with us.

REVIEW PROCESS

The evaluation of Applications submitted to Parkinson Canada will be completed by the Advisory Council through a peer review process. The Scientific Reviewers on the Advisory Council are composed of prominent neurologists, neurosurgeons, and neuroscientists from across Canada. The peer review

process is a cornerstone of Parkinson Canada's research program and provides for the highest quality of objective adjudication.

The Advisory Council is responsible for the evaluation of all Applications submitted to Parkinson Canada in response to this Request for Applications, to rate each of the Applications so that they may be ranked in order of priority for funding by Parkinson Canada. External reviewers will be solicited for additional expertise as needed. The Advisory Council anticipates that it will provide each applicant whose Application to participate in the Program has been declined with written notice of such decision and where possible, a brief written critique of the substance of their Application.

In addition to our Scientific Reviewers, Parkinson Canada is proud to involve the voices of People affected by Parkinson's in the evaluation of all of our grants and awards. As a patient focused organization, we want to leverage the unique and valuable perspective of lived experience experts into our decisions on which projects will be funded. That way we can ensure that the identified needs and interests of people affected by Parkinson's are reflected in our research program. This year, our lived experience reviewers will review the Project Impact and Patient Engagement Statements and provide a score that will account for 10% of the overall application score. Their score will be based on the application's potential impact towards the lives of Canadians with Parkinson's and the applicant's efforts to engage the community of people affected by Parkinson's into the design of their project and their knowledge dissemination efforts.

This year we have established a new Advisory Group, which is composed of past lived experience reviewers. This Advisory Group will hold 2-3 virtual meetings in October where interested applicants will be able to meet with and get feedback from past lived experience experts on their applications as it pertains to how they design their studies to improve the experience of patient participants in clinical studies, that project outcomes are designed to maximize impact to daily lives of people with Parkinson's, and that future knowledge translation activities are done with the general Parkinson's community in mind. For more information on this opportunity please email ko.currie@parkinson.ca.

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.

GENERAL POLICIES

This Request for Applications made by Parkinson Canada is subject to the General Policies (the "Policies") 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 Policies 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.

A successful applicant who has received an award under the Program may not transfer the award to another institution unless exceptionally approved by the chairs of the Research Policy Committee and Trainee Committee (please see Guidelines).

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 reports shall be submitted to the Parkinson Canada Research Department (research@parkinson.ca) no later than **one year (and two years) 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 November 1, 2024 (5:00 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 (600 words French)** 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. **Project Impact Statement:** Please describe your project and how it will impact the lives of Canadians affected by Parkinson's using language for a general audience (**750 words max; 900 words FR**). This section will be scored by Lived Experience Expert Reviewers (whose score accounts for 10% of the overall application). Applicants should use the following subheadings to organize their statement:
 - **Background** – what is the current state of research for your project?
 - **Hypothesis/Research Question** – what do you hope to learn?
 - **Methodology** – what tools and techniques will be used?
 - **Impact** – how will the project outcome affect the lives of Canadians with Parkinson's and the research community (short-term and long-term)? Include estimated timelines to clinical use, describe the possible benefits to daily life or access to healthcare, and any new scientific resources that may be generated for future use.
3. **Patient Involvement Statement:** Please state in **150 words or less (180 words French)** how you have engaged (or plan to engage) with people affected by Parkinson's in the design of your study. This engagement strategy may include considerations for patient recruitment, requirements for participation in clinical activities, or knowledge translation activities for the project outcomes. Please note that this section will also be reviewed and scored by lived experience reviewers.
4. **Project Narrative: (5 pages max; 6 pages French),** 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
 - i. If the project will use **C-OPN** and would like to be considered for an additional \$5,000 in their budget, please provide adequate description.
 - **Next steps**: 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.

5. **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 1 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).
6. **Biographical information** of the applicant (using the Parkinson Canada biographical sketch form).
7. **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.
8. **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.
9. **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.
10. **Signature of applicant** and an authorized signing official of the applicant's host institution.
11. **EDIJ Self-Identification Questionnaire**: All applicants are required to complete a self-identification questionnaire on SMAApply (under the EDIJ Self-Identification Questionnaire Program). The purpose of this questionnaire is for Parkinson Canada to better understand the demographics of our applicant pool and of our grant recipients. The applicant may choose the option "I prefer not to answer" for any question where they do not feel comfortable sharing personal information. The answers provided will have no bearing on any funding decisions and will only be used for internal evaluation of our funding programs. All answers from the questionnaires will be migrated into a de-identified aggregated format so that no responses can be tracked back to any one individual, and all responses will be deleted from SMAApply before Aug. 31, 2025.

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. In accordance with CIHR guidelines and evidence that documents written in French require more space than similar documents written in English, we will grant longer page/word allowances for applications written fully 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 (SMApply – <https://parkinsoncan.smapply.io/>). Please retain copies of all application documents in case there are any issues accessing application files. Incomplete applications or applications received later than **November 1, 2024 (5:00 pm EST)** will not be considered under any circumstances. Any applications in violation of these guidelines are subject to disqualification at the discretion of the Trainee Committee.

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.

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/apply-for-funding/.

OR CONTACT:

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