

Accelerator Grants: Migraine Research

Request for Applications (RFA)

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, and brain and spinal cord injuries. Looking at the brain as one system has underscored the need for increased collaboration across disciplines and 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 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

About Women's Brain Health Initiative (WBHI)

Many disorders associated with brain aging disproportionately affect women, and there has been a lack of research to understand why. Taking sex (biological factors) and gender (social influences) into account is essential to achieving health equity and advancing precision medicine.

Women's Brain Health Initiative is a Canadian and U.S. charitable foundation established in 2012, dedicated to protecting the brain health of women, caregivers, and families.

WBHI advances this mission by funding research focused on brain-aging disorders that disproportionately affect women and by delivering compelling, science-based prevention programs that help people better understand how to protect cognitive vitality throughout life. womensbrainhealth.org

Table of Contents

Rationale	3
Scope	3
Grant Details.....	3
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion	4
Eligibility	4
Use of Funds	4
Criteria for Assessment	5
Timeline	6
How to Apply	6
Registration Form	6
Full Application.....	7
Review Process.....	9
Confidentiality and Ownership.....	9
Communications	9
Contact Information	9

Rationale

Migraine is one of the most common neurological conditions worldwide and a leading cause of years lived with disability, affecting 12-14% of the global population^{1,2}. Women are disproportionately affected, being up to three times more likely to experience migraine than men. Most prevalent during adolescence and adulthood, migraine can interfere with educational attainment, workforce participation, caregiving, and economic productivity. As a complex neurological condition, migraines are characterized by recurrent attacks of moderate to severe head pain, often accompanied by nausea, vomiting, and sensitivity to light and sound, that can significantly impair daily functioning and quality of life.

In Canada, approximately 2.7 million people are diagnosed with migraine, with many more experiencing symptoms that remain undiagnosed^{3,4}. The societal and economic burden of migraine is substantial, with an estimated annual cost of \$14.6 billion to the Canadian economy due to missed workdays, presenteeism, reduced productivity, and early workforce departure. While advances in migraine therapies have provided options, effectiveness varies across individuals, and there is currently no cure⁴.

Despite its high prevalence and burden, migraine research funding has been limited, underscoring the urgent need to catalyze new insights to support the development of more effective strategies for prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. Additionally, there remains a critical gap in understanding the disproportionate impact of migraine on women and the factors that may influence this gap across the lifespan, such as hormonal changes in puberty, pregnancy, and menopause, among other biological factors. Addressing these gaps and catalyzing bold, innovative research will be essential to advancing our knowledge and improving outcomes for people living with migraine.

Scope

The *Accelerator Grants: Migraine Research* program aims to support bold, innovative research that has the potential to drive new insights and improve prevention, diagnosis, and treatment strategies for migraine.

The program will support research that advances our understanding of the causes, risk factors, and symptoms of migraine, including, but not limited to, the biological underpinnings of the condition; the identification of biomarkers to enhance prevention, diagnosis, and treatment management; and the development and testing of novel therapies or interventions. Projects must consider the influence of sex- and gender-related factors in the design, analysis, and evaluation of the research given the disproportionate impact of migraine on women.

It is anticipated that this funding will catalyze new insights and support the generation of preliminary data, tools, or interventions that can inform and enable new directions in the field.

Grant Details

The *Accelerator Grants: Migraine Research* program has an overall funding envelope of \$480,000 CAD to support up to three grants of \$160,000 each over three years. Grants are non-renewable.

1. Global, regional, and national burden of disorders affecting the nervous system, 1990–2021: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2021. (GBD 2021 Nervous System Disorders Collaboration, et al., 2024).
2. Migraine Canada, April 2026 (<https://migrainecanada.org/understanding-migraine/what-is-migraine/>).
3. Epidemiology and treatment utilization for Canadian patients with migraine: a literature review. (Graves et al., 2022).
4. An Economic Cost to Society: Migraine is widespread, misunderstood, and missed. Leger Healthcare, Whitepaper, 2025.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Evidence clearly shows that increasing equity, diversity and inclusion in research environments enhances excellence, innovation and creativity. We are committed to excellence through equity and 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.

Eligibility

This opportunity supports multidisciplinary teams that bring together the expertise required to address this complex neurological condition. Where appropriate, applicants are encouraged to meaningfully engage people with lived experience to ensure that research priorities, design, and outcomes reflect real-world needs and perspectives.

- Teams must include a minimum of two independent investigators, as described below, with one designated as the Principal Investigator.
- Investigators must be conducting research at, and affiliated with, an eligible Canadian academic institution for the entire duration of the grant and must be considered a full-time independent researcher at their institution. Such an individual normally holds the rank of assistant, associate, or full professor; can initiate and direct their own independent lines of research as principal investigator; has full responsibility for running their laboratories; has full control of their research funds; and is permitted to supervise trainees, if applicable, as per their institution's policy. Academic appointments must have started by the deadline for Full Application submission. Postdoctoral fellows, research associates, and adjunct faculty are not eligible to apply.
- Teams may include additional members and collaborators, as needed, to ensure the required expertise is present to carry out the proposed research.
- Proposals may be related but cannot be identical to any other funded projects. It is the responsibility of the applicants to notify Brain Canada immediately should overlap arise from funding awarded during the application and review process of this funding opportunity. Overlap is defined as having the same objectives and/or experimental aims as any other funded work.
- Applicants can only submit one application as Principal Investigator.
- Applicants must submit a Registration Form to be eligible to submit a Full Application.
- Applicants must be able to initiate the project in February 2027, when funding is expected to begin.

Use of Funds

Funds must contribute toward the direct costs of the research project for which they were awarded and should be directly attributable to the project or activity being performed. Funds can only be disbursed and used within Canada. Exceptions may be considered on a case-by-case basis with clear justification and prior approval from Brain Canada.

Eligible Costs

These funds may be used to support any aspect of the research project, including:

- Salaries for technical and administrative personnel;
- Stipends of trainees;
- Supplies and materials;
- Maintenance of essential equipment and/or purchase of equipment that is currently unavailable but essential for the project;

- Provision of special services, user fees, payments to study participants;
- Knowledge Mobilization, including, but not limited to, travel of the Principal Investigator and trainees for presentation of results at conferences, publication costs in peer-reviewed and open-access journals or repositories (including article processing charges), knowledge exchange activities (workshops, brochures, books), knowledge diffusion activities via online technologies (webinars, podcasts).

Ineligible Costs

- Salaries and consulting fees of any investigator or researcher holding an independent academic or research appointment;
- General office and lab equipment;
- Indirect costs or overhead costs associated with managing the research project.

Please note that this list is not exhaustive, and Brain Canada must be consulted on expenses that are not listed here to determine the eligibility of other categories of expenditure.

Criteria for Assessment

There will be equal weighting of the following criteria:

Innovation and Originality

Projects should demonstrate bold, novel thinking and innovative approaches with the greatest potential to yield new insights, preliminary data and/or tools, open the field to new directions, or address a critical barrier to progress, with preference for ideas that have the potential to significantly shift current paradigms for research in migraine.

Feasibility

Feasibility will be assessed based on the clarity and coherence of the proposed approach, the appropriateness of the methods with consideration for mitigation strategies, and the alignment of the research plan with the available resources and timeline. While preliminary data are not required, a clear rationale, hypothesis, and experimental plan must be articulated. Appropriate background and justification for the proposed research should be provided through literature citations and data from other sources. The team's potential to successfully complete the project based on their expertise and track record will also be considered.

Potential for Impact

The degree to which the proposed research has the potential to fundamentally change our understanding of migraine with the broadest impact, from the underlying mechanisms of migraine to improved prevention, diagnosis, and treatment and care. Incorporation of sex- and gender-specific considerations in the rationale, hypothesis, objectives, and methodology is critically important for broadening the potential impact of the work and the potential for new knowledge to be translated into health benefits, especially for relevant populations experiencing a disproportionate burden.

Timeline

Launch of Request for Applications	April 28, 2026
Deadline for Receipt of Registration Form	17:00 ET, June 18, 2026
Invitation to Full Application	Week of June 22 - 26, 2026
Deadline for Receipt of Full Application	17:00 ET, September 3, 2026
Notification of Decision	December 2026
Funding Begins	February 2027

How to Apply

Please note that this funding opportunity includes a Registration Form and a Full Application stage. **Applicants must submit a Registration Form in order to be eligible to submit a Full Application.** Following an administrative check and relevance review, applicants deemed eligible will be invited to submit a Full Application.

Registration Forms and Full Applications must be submitted using Brain Canada's grant management system, SmartSimple (https://braincanada.smartsimple.ca/s_Login.jsp). **It is the sole responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure their submission adheres to the requirements and is received by the deadlines outlined above. There will be no appeal to late submissions.** Receipt of the Registration Form and Full Application will be acknowledged.

Registration Form

Project Summary

- Project title
- Keywords describing the research project (up to 10 words)
- A summary of the research project, outlining its relevance and alignment with the scope of the program (maximum 500 words).

Team Members

- List the names, affiliations, and roles of the Principal Investigator and team members, ensuring the composition of the team meets the eligibility criteria outlined above.

Certification and Signature

The Principal Investigator must certify that all members of the team have agreed to their inclusion in the application and allow them to represent the team throughout the application process. Please note that institutional signatures are not required at the Registration Form stage.

Optional Information

- Provide names and contact information for up to three individuals within Canada or internationally who are knowledgeable in the research area and would be able to evaluate the application. Suggested individuals should not have a conflict of interest.
- Individuals to whom the application should not be sent for review.

Brain Canada will take these and other considerations into account when establishing the composition of the external Peer Review Panel.

Full Application

Full Applications must be formatted using 12-point Times New Roman or 11.5-point Arial font, single-spaced, on a letter-size page with 1" minimum margins. Use of a condensed font and spacing is not permitted. Other fonts and font sizes are acceptable for text in tables, charts, figures, graphs and legends only, as long as it remains legible when the page is viewed at 100%. The Full Application should be aligned with information provided at the Registration Form stage. *Applications received in any other format, exceeding the page limits, incomplete, or late, will be rejected.*

Applicant Information

Brain Canada has implemented a demographic survey to evaluate the progress of its programs in fostering EDI. Please note that the survey will be sent via email, upon confirmation of the applicant's submission of the Full Application. The information collected will not be shared in an identifiable form with the public, external stakeholders (e.g., Health Canada, funding partners), or reviewers, and will have no impact on the evaluation of submitted grant applications. Survey responses are completely anonymized and aggregated to ensure protection of the identity of any individual. Please see Brain Canada's [Privacy Policy](#).

Project Summary

- Project title
- Keywords describing the research project (up to 10 words)
- A summary of the research project, outlining its relevance and alignment with the scope of the program (maximum 500 words).

Lay Summary

- Suitable for publication and understandable by the general public (maximum 300 words).

Proposal (maximum eight pages, including figures and legends, excluding references)

Proposals should include the following information, structured to best address the Criteria for Assessment outlined above:

1. The **overall objectives** to be achieved by the end of the funding period.
2. The **rationale** for undertaking the study, including:
 - the current state of research on the topic and key knowledge gaps that motivate this study;
 - a statement about the innovation and originality of the project, preliminary evidence supporting the proposed research, and the research hypotheses.
3. The **work plan**, including:
 - the approaches, methods and techniques that will be used to achieve the stated objectives;
 - methods of data analysis, including statistical methods and calculations to show that the study will be adequately powered;
 - potential pitfalls or obstacles, and mitigation strategies to overcome them;
 - considerations of biological variables (e.g., sex, age, etc.) and social determinants of health (e.g., gender, socioeconomic status, etc.) in the research design at all stages of the research process, as appropriate, including identification of the research question(s), study design and population groups, methodology, data collection, data analysis and

interpretation, identification of stakeholders, and knowledge mobilization. Applicants are encouraged to review CIHR's [Online Training Modules for Integrating Sex and Gender in Health Research](#).

4. The **expected outputs** from the study, and how the findings will be disseminated, including:
 - the expected impacts (short and long term) of the results in advancing knowledge and improving the diagnosis, prevention, and/or treatment of migraine. Refer as needed to these categories of research impacts: advancing knowledge, building capacity, and potential for future health impacts;
 - plans for making the data and knowledge generated throughout the project available to other stakeholders;
 - knowledge mobilization plan describing the intended target audiences for the findings, plans for dissemination and stakeholder engagement toward achieving research impact, and how the findings may be adapted and shared with broader knowledge users
5. The **role of trainees** in the project and the unique learning opportunities they will experience, if applicable.

Timeline and Anticipated Milestones

Indicate the key intermediate stages in achieving the overall objectives, and the projected timeframe for achieving them. A template will be provided at the Full Application stage.

Team Members

List the names, affiliations, and roles of the Principal Investigator and team members, excluding trainees, ensuring the composition of the team continues to meet the eligibility criteria and includes the expertise needed to carry out the proposed research project.

Biographical sketches (maximum five pages) of the Principal Investigator and all other faculty-level team members must be submitted. A template will be provided at the Full Application stage. Biosketches are not required for consultants, trainees, technical personnel, or people with lived experience on the team.

Letters of Support (Optional)

Applicants may submit up to two letters of support (maximum one page per letter) from collaborators, if applicable. The letters should explain the nature of collaboration and outline the specific contributions of the collaborator(s) involved in the proposed research project.

Budget

Applicants must submit a **yearly budget** (template will be provided at the Full Application stage) and a written **budget justification**, maximum one page, describing the proposed costs in each category of expenditure. Please provide sufficient information to allow reviewers to assess the suitability of the cost allocation. *Applicants are required to request the full grant amount of \$160,000 and, notionally, the amount should be equally split across the three-year grant.*

Institutional Approvals

Please provide a written narrative describing the applicable approvals (e.g., ethics for human subjects or animals, biohazard approval, etc.) you have in place at the Full Application deadline, and a timeline for any addendums or additional approvals specific to the proposal that may need to be added thereafter. Please note that, if awarded, applicants will be required to provide documentation, where applicable,

demonstrating institutional approvals and compliance with policies on the ethical use of human subjects, animals, and biohazards prior to funding release.

Certification and Signatures

All signatures must be submitted with the application by the deadline for Full Application submission.

- Signature of the Principal Investigator is mandatory for the application to be considered complete.
- Institutional Signature: Signature of the responsible official of the institution where the Principal Investigator will conduct the research is required.

Review Process

Registration Form

Registration Forms submitted by the deadline will undergo an administrative check and relevance review by Brain Canada to ensure alignment with the scope of this funding opportunity and all eligibility criteria are met. All applicants will be notified regarding the administrative check and relevance review of their application. Eligible applications will be invited to the Full Application stage; ineligible applications will be withdrawn from the competition.

Full Application

Brain Canada will manage the peer review process. Full Applications submitted by the deadline will be reviewed by at least two members of an external Peer Review Panel composed of international and/or Canadian researchers with broad experience and expertise in the relevant field(s). Brain Canada will take into account any conflicts of interest and other relevant considerations to ensure a balanced panel.

Based on the reviewer scores, the Peer Review Panel will discuss the top applications. The Panel will recommend the applications that have received a high merit score. Applicants will receive anonymized written reviewer comments. Applicants whose applications were discussed at the Peer Review Panel meeting will additionally receive Scientific Officer notes from the proceedings. Appeals against the assessment of the Peer Review Panel will not be entertained.

Confidentiality and Ownership

All materials submitted for this funding opportunity will be kept confidential and only shared with reviewers, Review Panel members, and observers who have signed confidentiality and non-disclosure agreements. The funding partners do not claim ownership of intellectual property (IP) arising from the research they fund and expect that any IP arising from this funding is developed and commercialized according to the policies of the research institutions in which the research is performed.

Communications

Grant recipients must make every effort to attend events organized by the funding partners, and present their projects, if applicable, to demonstrate the importance and impact of their research.

Contact Information

For more information, or if you have any questions regarding the application process, please contact programs@braincanada.ca.