

## Terms of Reference: ALS Canada-Brain Canada Clinical Research Fellowship 2024

### Overview

In the effort towards continued pursuance of new ALS treatments, a better understanding of the disease and improved quality of life, it is imperative that promising young investigators are nurtured into a career focused on ALS research. Specialized training of young MDs in both clinical care and research skills related to ALS is crucial to building better clinical infrastructure across Canada. This fellowship is designed to support the further training of a clinician to develop the skills necessary to be a specialist in ALS and provide experience/training in clinical or basic research relevant to the field.

### About the ALS Society of Canada

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

### About Brain Canada Foundation

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

To date, Health Canada has invested over \$155 million through the CBRF, which has been matched by Brain Canada and its donors and partners. [www.braincanada.ca](http://www.braincanada.ca)

## Funding

- One fellowship of up to \$200,000 CAD total is available for up to two years.
- A one-year fellowship of \$100,000 CAD may be requested provided appropriate justification is included.
- Funds may only be used as stipend/salary support, with the expectation that tuition funds are included within. A budget should be submitted to outline the requested support and where no tuition fees are involved appropriate justification for the request should be made.
- Should the fellowship and/or award be terminated early, any unused funds must be returned to ALS Canada and Brain Canada.

ALS Canada and Brain Canada do not wish to own or have vested interest in intellectual property that may arise from funded research projects. The joint research program is solely dedicated to furthering the global understanding of ALS and/or related neurological diseases and developing therapeutic avenues for slowing disease progression. ALS Canada and Brain Canada support the intellectual property policies of the host institutions of award recipients where funds are disseminated.

## Eligibility

The applicant must be a citizen or permanent resident of Canada, have completed residency training leading to certification (FRCPC or equivalent) in neurology, psychiatry, or a related specialty and have an interest in pursuing an academic career in motor neuron diseases. Applications with proof of post fellowship offer of employment will be held in high regard.

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

The applicant's supervisor must be a clinician recognized for expertise in both ALS patient care and research. The fellowship must be carried out at a Canadian institution, and it is recommended that the fellowship be carried out at a Canadian academic medical centre with an active multidisciplinary ALS program. Individuals with fellowship plans that include multiple week stints at non-host Canadian ALS centres will be highly regarded as they will train under differing environments and styles of best practice.

This opportunity is for a full-time position with most of the applicant's time to be spent pursuing the fellowship. Clinical training is expected to be directed by the proposed supervisor. The awardee will work closely with multidisciplinary team members including allied health professionals, patient advocacy staff, research staff, etc. Co-supervision is possible and is particularly applicable when clinical training and basic

research training are to be provided by separate individuals. Research training is to be concurrent with clinical training. If research training is already complete at the time of application, proof of training, description, and justification for fellowship consideration should be provided. Those applicants receiving only the clinical training portion of the fellowship will qualify for an adjusted budget representing salary without tuition assistance.

If no prior formal research training or degree have been obtained, applicants are required to pursue an educational program that has the objective of preparing the individual to ultimately design, execute, and collaborate in clinical or basic research. Such a program would lead to an appropriate certification, for example an MSc in public health/clinical epidemiology or in neuroscience. The academic and clinical training program should be individualized to optimize the research and clinical training of the candidate in consideration of previous education and goals to achieve this program. Under special circumstances, inter-institutional educational opportunities may be considered, if justified.

It is expected that the applicant will play a major role in a research project specifically related to ALS; the applicant's role in the project must be clearly defined in the application. It is expected that such a study would lead to a presentation at a scientific meeting and publication.

### Important Dates

- Call announced January 10, 2024
- Application deadline February 7, 2024 (1:00 pm ET)
- Notification of award March 2024
- Earliest funding start date July 1, 2024 (funding start in 2025 can be requested by applicant)

### Application Process

Complete applications should be submitted via email to the ALS Canada Research Team ([research@als.ca](mailto:research@als.ca)), as a **single PDF file by 1:00 pm ET on February 7, 2024**. Applicants should request delivery and read receipts. An email acknowledging receipt of the application will be sent. If you do not receive an email, please follow up with the ALS Canada Research Team directly.

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

Please submit your applications for review in the following order:

- 1) Cover page
- 2) Letter from the applicant (limit 2 pages)
- 3) Letter from the proposed supervisor (limit 2 pages)

- 4) Description and justification if no formal research training will be involved (limit 1 page)
- 5) Scientific summary/abstract (limit ½ page)
- 6) Research plan/Fellowship proposal (limit 3 pages)
- 7) Figures and Tables (optional, limit 1 page)
- 8) Research training environment including plan for training at non-host CALS centres, if applicable (limit 2 pages)
- 9) Percentage of time spent on other activities (limit ½ page)
- 10) Budget outline (limit ½ page)
- 11) Curriculum vitae of applicant (no page limit)
- 12) Curriculum vitae of proposed supervisor (limit 4 pages)
- 13) Letter indicating post-fellowship offer of employment (if applicable)
- 14) Additional letter of support

### 1) Cover page

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

### 2) Letter from the applicant

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

- Previous training and how it relates to the present proposal
- Research goals and how the proposed training and environment will contribute
- Career goals and how this training and environment will contribute
- Importance of their research proposal to the field of ALS research and ALS Canada and Brain Canada's visions

### 3) Letter from the proposed supervisor

The letter from the proposed supervisor should describe why the applicant is being supported, including the fit between the applicant and the supervisor's research program, how the overall professional development of the trainee would be supported, and how the supervisor's research program and the training environment would prepare the trainee for a career in ALS research.

### 4) Description and justification if no formal research training will be involved (if applicable)

Applications where there will be no formal research training must include a description of previous training and/or justification for the omission of training from the application.

### 5) Scientific summary/abstract

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

#### 6) Research plan/Fellowship proposal

Research plan can be completed in collaboration with the proposed supervisor including details of the clinical training, research training, formal education program and funding available to support the proposed project – limit **THREE** pages excluding bibliography. As outlined below, an additional page for preliminary data is allowed.

#### 7) Figures and Tables (optional)

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

#### 8) Research training environment

This section may include, but is not limited to, a description of space, equipment and personnel support available to the applicant, opportunities for professional development, etc., where applicable. It should also include any plan to train for periods of time at other CALS sites, different from the host institution, during the fellowship.

#### 9) Percentage of time spent on other activities

Please provide a breakdown of time spent on additional activities.

#### 10) Budget outline

A budget outline for the requested support should be provided using the [template](#). Where no tuition fees are involved, appropriate justification for the request should be made.

#### 11) Curriculum vitae of the applicant

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

#### 12) Curriculum vitae of the proposed supervisor

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

#### 13) Letter indicating post fellowship offer of employment

Applications to the Clinical Research Fellowship including some indication that a position will be available at the end of the funding period will be held in high regard. Relevance of the position to the investment by ALS Canada and Brain Canada will be considered. ALS Canada, Brain Canada, and reviewers are aware of the difficulty in securing such offers and applications without one are still highly encouraged.

#### 14) Additional letter of support

A maximum of one additional letter of support must be sent directly to [research@als.ca](mailto:research@als.ca).

#### **Evaluation**

Applications will be reviewed and scored by a panel of CALS members and potentially additional reviewers that may include, but are not limited to, non-clinician members of ALS Canada's Scientific & Medical Advisory Council (SMAC) and international ALS clinicians. Reviewers will consider the merit of the applicant, the quality of the project and training environment, and the relevance of the work to ALS and the vision of both ALS Canada and Brain Canada. Applications may be recommended to be amended and reassessed at the discretion of the peer review panel.

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

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

#### **Conditions of the Award**

1. Funds will be sent as annual instalments to the supervisor's institution (host institution). Release of funds will be subject to receipt of relevant ethics approvals from the supervisor's institutional review committees, where necessary (for use of human subjects, research animals, or hazardous materials). Note, the supervisor will be responsible for ensuring that relevant ethics approvals have been obtained at each participating institution and sent to the VP Research, ALS 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.
3. A final progress report is due within 60 days of end date of the grant. Reporting templates will be provided by ALS Canada upon acceptance of the award. Reports will be evaluated by both ALS Canada and Brain Canada.
4. Funding is contingent upon compliance with the policies of ALS Canada and Brain Canada.

5. Awardees must inform ALS Canada and Brain Canada about any concurrent offers of externally funded fellowships or salary. Efforts will be made to accommodate collaborative funding where possible.
6. The intent of these fellowships is to fund research that will be in the open domain. All manuscripts, presentations, abstracts, etc. must acknowledge funding by ALS Canada, the Government of Canada (Health Canada), and Brain Canada. Funded researchers should make every effort to publish all findings related to the project and to acknowledge ALS Canada and Brain Canada in media events discussing research funded through this competition. Manuscripts or other presentations in press must be sent to the VP, Research of ALS Canada upon acceptance for publication. ALS Canada should also be notified as soon as possible of media events related to the project, and ALS Canada will relay this information to Brain Canada.
7. Awardees are required to inform the VP Research of ALS Canada of significant difficulties, availability of resources, additional funding sources, or significant changes to the experimental plan throughout the term of the grant. As per ALS Canada and Brain Canada policies, in the case of a leave of absence (e.g., parental leave or medical leave/long-term disability), the award will be suspended and resumed upon return. ALS Canada and Brain Canada cannot provide paid leave. Vacation policy will follow the awardee's institutional guidelines.
8. For the purposes of advocating the missions of ALS Canada and Brain Canada, it is expected that funded researchers will actively engage with, or on behalf of, ALS Canada and/or Brain Canada when requested.
9. Awardees will be expected to make every effort to attend the annual ALS Canada Research Forum as a sponsored invitee and will be encouraged to present their project upon request.

## Questions and Additional Information

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