

Terms of Reference: ALS Canada-Brain Canada Trainee Program 2024

Overview

The vision of ALS Canada is to achieve “a future without ALS”, and the vision of Brain Canada is “Bold science for brain health”. Both partners have a strong belief that it is crucial that promising young investigators are nurtured in the early stages of their careers, so they might strive to promote discovery and advancement. Attracting the brightest young minds to ALS research will contribute to a succession plan for the Canadian ALS research community and will nurture and support innovative ideas and compelling breakthroughs across the spectrum of brain-related disease.

About ALS 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

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

Grant Details

- A \$315,000 pool of funds will be available for this program.
- The distribution of Doctoral Awards, Postdoctoral Fellowships will be determined by relative merit of the applications.
- Each Doctoral Award would be funded at \$25,000 per year for up to three years.
- Each Postdoctoral Fellowship would be funded at \$55,000 per year for up to three years.

Use of Funds

- Funds may only be used as stipend/salary support.
- Funds may not be used for employee benefits paid by the host institution.
- Should the fellowship 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

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.

General Eligibility

All applicants will have demonstrated contributions to research which may or may not have related directly to ALS but proposed future research and training must be ALS-related. It is expected that all applicants 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 presentation(s) at a scientific meeting and/or publication(s).

Doctoral Scheme

At the time of application, eligible trainees have applied to, been accepted for, or are within the first three years of a PhD program under the supervision of an investigator who holds an academic position at a

qualifying Canadian institution, defined according to [CIHR guidelines](#). Applicants must be in a position to start their PhD program and/or funding by December 31, 2024. Non-Canadians training in Canadian labs are eligible to apply, but if awarded, would need to demonstrate they are eligible to work/study in Canada for the duration of the requested funding.

Postdoctoral Scheme

Qualifying trainees currently hold or have secured a postdoctoral position under the supervision of an investigator who holds an academic position at a qualifying Canadian institution, defined according to [CIHR guidelines](#). Non-Canadians training in Canadian labs are eligible to apply, but if awarded, would need to demonstrate they are eligible to work/study in Canada for the duration of the requested funding. At the time of application, applicants should be transitioning from graduate work to a postdoctoral position or be within the first two years of postdoctoral studies.

Important Dates

- Call announced February 20, 2024
- Application deadline April 3, 2024 (1:00 pm ET)
- Notification of award July 2024
- Earliest funding start date September 1, 2024

Please note that all applicants, regardless of the scheme, must be in a position to start their funding by December 31, 2024, at the latest.

Application Process

Complete applications should be submitted via email to the ALS Canada Research Team (research@als.ca), as a **single PDF file** by **1:00 pm ET on April 3, 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) Scientific summary/abstract (limit ½ page)
- 5) Research plan/Fellowship proposal (limit 3 pages)

- 6) Figures and Tables (optional, limit 1 page)
- 7) Research training environment (limit 1 page)
- 8) Percentage of time spent on other activities (limit ½ page)
- 9) Curriculum vitae of applicant (no page limit)
- 10) Curriculum vitae of proposed supervisor (limit 4 pages)
- 11) 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 the visions of ALS Canada and Brain Canada

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) Scientific summary/abstract

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

5) Research plan/Fellowship proposal

Research plan can be completed in collaboration with the proposed supervisor – limit **THREE** pages excluding bibliography. The research plan should be organized under the following headings:

- Rationale for the project
 - including hypothesis
- Specific aims
- Background

- a comprehensive literature review is not expected. Please supply only the information that is required for reviewers, who are specialists in ALS and neurodegenerative disease, to understand the proposal
- Preliminary data (if existing)
- Experimental Plan
 - a clear and logical experimental plan that addresses the hypothesis and specific aims;
 - a description of how sex, gender, and/or other diversity considerations are taken into account in the research project, as applicable
- Bibliography
 - include titles and all authors of the referenced articles; excluded from page limit

6) 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.

7) 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.

8) Percentage of time spent on other activities

Please provide a breakdown of time spent on additional activities.

9) 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.

10) 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 CIHR Common CV.

11) Additional letter of support

A maximum of one additional letter of support must be sent directly to research@als.ca.

Evaluation

Applications in both schemes will be reviewed by a panel of experts, selected jointly by Brain Canada and ALS Canada. The composition of this review panel will include (but is not limited to) not-in-conflict member(s) of the Scientific & Medical Advisory Council (SMAC) of ALS Canada, non-ALS researchers with relevant expertise, and additional members of the Canadian research community (as necessary).

Reviewers will consider the merit of the applicant, the quality of the project, work to date, and the relevance of the work to ALS. Each application will be assigned two reviewers and based on their preliminary scoring, a subset of applications will be discussed and live scored by the entire panel for ranking and recommendation.

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. 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. 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.
5. 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.
6. Trainees 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 trainee's institutional guidelines.
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.
8. Funded trainees will be expected to make every effort to attend the annual ALS Canada Research Forum irrespective of being chosen as an accompanying junior for their supervisor. ALS Canada will cover their expenses as a separate, sponsored invitee.

Questions and Additional Information

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