

## Brain Canada

# 2024 Platform Support Grants (PSG)

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 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, 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](http://www.braincanada.ca)



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## Special Notice

Brain Canada has consistently demonstrated great flexibility in helping researchers realize their research projects. Historically, the Government of Canada, through Health Canada, has also shown flexibility by allowing unspent federal funds at the end of a fiscal year to be carried forward to future years, accommodating delays from researchers in starting or completing their projects as planned. However, recent discussions with Health Canada's representatives have indicated a significant change in policy whereby the Government of Canada will no longer accept requests for reprofiling federal funds to subsequent years. Federal funds not disbursed to institutions by Brain Canada on a fiscal basis will now have to be returned to Health Canada and will be lost indefinitely.

This new policy could jeopardize Brain Canada's capacity to fully fund research projects and meet its financial commitments. To avoid such a situation, it is crucial for researchers, institutions, and sponsors involved in the process to ensure that projects are implemented quickly and completed according to the payment schedule set out in the agreements. Institutions and researchers will have to act promptly at the first sign of potential delays in a research project so that we can work closely together to find solutions and ensure that funds are disbursed on time. Federal funds may, otherwise, need to be withdrawn for projects that experience undue delays and/or are not completed within a reasonable timeline.

## Rationale

High-impact research in neuroscience and mental health has always required skill, imagination, determination, and insight. Today, research additionally requires access to shared resources, including equipment, facilities, services, databases, patient repositories, and biobanks; collectively referred to as "platforms". Such platforms are complex, highly sophisticated, and expensive, but are now recognized as important enablers of capacity building and a cost-effective means to make cutting-edge equipment, technology, and services available – beyond what any researcher could develop on their own. Platforms also play a critical role in fostering innovation and interdisciplinary collaboration. As such, access to platforms is essential to address the evolving needs of research.

Brain Canada has identified support for research platforms as a gap in the neuroscience research funding environment and the *Platform Support Grants (PSG)* program aims to continue addressing this critical need.

## Scope

The Platform Support Grants program supports major research platforms at a local, regional, and/or national scale with the goal of providing enhanced technical and research capabilities to multiple investigators in the neurosciences. Through the 2024 Platform Support Grants program, researchers can apply for funding through one of two streams.

**Stream 1:** Will support platforms that are in development or already existing but that have never been funded through Brain Canada's *Platform Support Grants* program.

**Stream 2:** Will support platforms that have previously received funding through Brain Canada's *Platform Support Grants* program. Please note that for Platform Support Grants that are currently ongoing, no more than 5% of the total research grant amount from the existing grant can remain unspent as of March 1, 2025. In addition, this amount must be completely spent down, including any No-Cost Extensions, within the first six (6) months of the March 1, 2025 start date.

Leveraging the full potential of a platform relies on the expertise of the staff operating it to make it

accessible, and to ensure that performance and efficiency are optimized. As technologies evolve, there is a need for service-oriented expert scientists with the ability to implement, run, improve, and adjust technologies to keep up with research demands. The linking and coordination of existing local or regional facilities into a national framework or network is especially encouraged under this scheme, as is the integration of Canadian resources into an international platform or consortium, as long as these actions improve its accessibility and utility to investigators in Canada. Since technical approaches commonly used in other fields of health sciences can be applicable to the neurosciences, platforms may serve researchers working in other fields; however, the proposed platform enhancement must be of specific and unique benefit to the neuroscience community.

Central to PSG is the concept of added value, support from Brain Canada and sponsors must result in at least one of the following outcomes:

- Improvement in operations and capabilities of existing platforms such that research is facilitated and/or accelerated.
- Access to specialized technology or integration and coordination of existing infrastructure such that quality is improved and more widely accessible.
- Creation of new data pools, or improved access to existing data, which allows for the conduct of research activities not previously feasible.
- A discernable impact on Canada's capabilities in neuroscience research, even for local and regional platforms.

Examples of added value include:

- Improved maintenance strategies to extend the lifespan of current platforms;
- Performing essential repairs, and upgrading hardware (see Eligible Costs);
- Increasing or upgrading technical support in order to offer additional services, improved client support, or extended hours of service;
- Reducing user fees to the academic sector (i.e., enabling those previously unable to access the platform to do so);
- Enhancing the ability of neuroscience researchers to share and retrieve research data, biological samples, and/or adopt common methodology;
- Standardizing the acquisition and curation of materials and developing standard operating procedures that will improve reliability and reproducibility;
- Demonstration of research projects that would be otherwise impossible without the services and/or information provided by the platform (see Eligible Costs);
- Faster uptake of novel techniques due to the availability and shared resourcing of trained personnel;
- Developing novel technical and methodological approaches for neuroscience research, including informatics tools and software, that will have broad applicability and impact on research progress;
- Engaging stakeholders to ensure that knowledge is more rapidly translated to practice and that ethical issues in neuroscience research are addressed.

**Platform Support Grants are not intended to replace current sources of funding or merely sustain current levels of platform service and capability.**

## Sponsored Opportunity

Through this sponsored PSG funding opportunity, Brain Canada aims to assist sponsoring organizations, agencies, institutions, and individuals who wish to build capacity and develop or enhance research platforms in specific thematic and/or geographic areas. **It is strongly advised that researchers and sponsors begin to discuss possible sponsorship of a platform as early as possible in the application planning process.**

Applicants and sponsors are invited to review the “[Sponsored Opportunity Package](#)” summarizing important details about the sponsored opportunity alongside Frequently Asked Questions.

## Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Evidence clearly shows that increasing equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in research environments enhances excellence, innovation and creativity. In addition, incorporation of EDI principles in the design and execution of research involving human participants is critically important for broadening the potential impact of the work and the potential for new knowledge to be translated into health benefits. Given this heterogeneity and the diversity of the Canadian population, applicants must consider biological variables (i.e., sex, age, etc.) and social determinants of health (i.e., gender, socioeconomic status, etc.) in the research design, where appropriate. Applicants are encouraged to consider how their proposed research addresses EDI consistent with Brain Canada’s position on sex and gender-based analysis plus (SGBA+) and EDI, available in [Brain Canada's SGBA+ and EDI Action Plan 2022-25](#). Applicants are also encouraged to refer to CIHR’s guide on [How to integrate sex and gender into research](#) for more information.

In addition to EDI considerations in the research design, Brain Canada is committed to excellence through equity and encourages applicants of diverse backgrounds to apply to this funding opportunity, which will promote the expression of diverse perspectives, approaches, and experiences, including those of underrepresented groups.

## Eligibility

This competition is open to groups of investigators working in neuroscience research. Broadly, this encompasses all areas of neuroscience and any disciplines that are being applied to the study of the nervous system in health and disease, including neurological and mental health disciplines, as well as associated social, biological, chemical, physical, engineering, mathematics, and computer sciences areas that have a primary objective of advancing our understanding of the brain, nervous system, and special senses, or to resolve problems arising from their dysfunction.

- One of the platform team members will be designated the Principal Investigator (PI), nominated by the platform team, to be the individual responsible for submitting the application and for all communications with Brain Canada. The PI is generally the individual responsible for the overall management of the platform. If the platform is a physical entity, it would generally be located at the PI’s institution. The PI must be conducting research at, and affiliated with, a Canadian institution for the entire duration of the grant. Academic appointments must have started by the deadline for Full Application submission.
- Investigators must be considered independent researchers at their institution. Such individuals normally hold the rank of assistant, associate, or full professor; can initiate and direct their own independent lines of research as Principal Investigator; have full responsibility for running their

laboratories; have full control of their research funds; and are permitted to supervise trainees (if applicable, as per their institution's policy).

- A mandatory six (6) month administrative period will be implemented to allow sufficient time to ensure all necessary institutional agreements (e.g., sub-site agreements) and approvals (e.g., research ethics board approval) are put in place within the first six (6) months of the March 1, 2025 start date.
- **\*\*Brain Canada's current Contribution Agreement with the Government of Canada, through Health Canada, for the Canada Brain Research Fund, requires that Year 1 federal funding from Brain Canada must be disbursed by March 31, 2025. Applicants, sponsors, and the Host Institutions are expected to work with Brain Canada to ensure a Joint Funding Agreement and Research Grant Agreement are executed in a timely manner, by the March 1, 2025 start date, **subject to the risk of forfeiting the awarded grant.**\*\***
- Only one application per proposed platform can be submitted to this funding opportunity.
- **For Stream 2:** Please note that for Platform Support Grants that are currently ongoing, no more than 5% of the total research grant amount from the existing grant can remain unspent as of March 1, 2025. In addition, this amount must be completely spent down, including any No-Cost Extensions, within the first six (6) months of the March 1, 2025 start date.
- **For Stream 2:** Any team member previously involved in the funded project, and meeting the eligibility criteria, can serve as Principal Investigator; however, they must notify the other team members of their intention to apply.

## Use of Funds

The funds must be allocated toward the direct costs of the platform for which they were awarded and should be directly attributable to the project or activity being performed. No more than 20% of the total research grant amount may be disbursed to international institutions.

**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.**

### Eligible Costs:

- Purchase of service contracts, supplies, equipment and hardware needed to develop and operate the platform and/or to prolong the life of the platform, through maintenance, repairs and other improvements, ultimately ensuring it remains "state of the art" by, for example, allowing for increased performance, capacity, and/or number of users to be supported. *Purchase of equipment and hardware may not exceed one quarter (25%) of the total research grant amount.*
- Salaries and benefits for technical and professional personnel responsible for developing, operating, and maintaining the platform.
- Stipends for trainees.
- Costs related to the development and dissemination of, as well as the access to, databases, data repositories, patient registries, informatics platforms and portals to access and deposit data, technical protocols, data standards, and standard operating procedures.
- Training programs for new users and technical staff; advertising the availability and capability of the platform to users; communications between users intended to improve utilization and operation of the platform; meetings of management committees for the purpose of improving operations of the platform.
- Knowledge Mobilization, including, but not limited to, travel of the principal investigators 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).

- **Optional:** Expenses related to a research project intended to demonstrate the utility and value of the platform and secure sustaining funding from other sources, *not to exceed one quarter (25%) of the total research grant amount*. Please consult the [Stream 1](#) and [Stream 2](#) Full Application components for more details.

### Ineligible Costs:

- Salaries and consulting fees of any investigator or researcher holding an independent academic appointment.
- Indirect or overhead costs associated with managing the project.
- Renovation or construction of space, purchase of standard office and laboratory furniture (cabinets, stools, computer desks, etc.).
- Basic laboratory services (heat, light, HVAC, municipal water supply, natural gas, security, cleaning, etc.) and research support services normally provided by an academic institution (e.g., libraries and other repositories of published works, basic animal care, technology transfer functions).
- Costs involved in meeting regulatory or ethical requirements, occupational health and safety requirements, audits or requirements for licensing, insurance, etc.
- Costs associated with protection of intellectual property.
- Costs that are not related to the field of brain research. In other words, eligible costs are restricted to cover only operations for research activities relevant to neuroscience and mental health.
- For platforms that integrate research with other activities, such as service delivery or education and advocacy, costs that are not directly attributable to research and associated knowledge mobilization activities.

**\*\***Please note that under Brain Canada's current Contribution Agreement with the Government of Canada, through Health Canada, for the Canada Brain Research Fund, yearly federal funding from Brain Canada to the Host Institution must be disbursed in accordance with the agreed upon payment schedule at the Research Grant Agreement stage. Any federal funding not disbursed by Brain Canada in this manner may need to be forfeited. **\*\***

**\*\***In addition, federal funding for the entire grant must be disbursed by March 31, 2028. While sponsors' funds can be disbursed after this date, any federal funding not disbursed by Brain Canada by this date may need to be forfeited. **\*\***

### Grant Details

Brain Canada, through the Canada Brain Research Fund, has allocated \$13 million CAD of federal funding to the 2024 Platform Support Grants program, to be matched by funding provided by sponsors secured by the applicants, for a total possible funding envelope of \$26 million dollars. Please note that Brain Canada is aiming to have a 50:50 distribution of funding awarded through Stream 1 and Stream 2. The final ratio of applications funded in each stream will ultimately be determined by the number of applications received to each stream and the results of the peer review process.

Grants will be over three and a half (3.5) years, including the six (6) month administrative period; non-renewable. Total grant amounts are flexible to accommodate the needs of each platform. Historically,

grants awarded through the PSG program have ranged from \$138,000 - \$6.1 million (including matching funds) across the grant duration.

**Note: The Platform Support Grants program will be launched again by Brain Canada in 2026.**

## Timeline

Launch of Request for Applications	June 19, 2024
<b>Deadline for Receipt of Registration Forms</b>	<b>17:00 ET, July 24, 2024</b>
Access to Grant Management System	By July 30, 2024
<b>Deadline for Receipt of Full Applications</b>	<b>17:00 ET, September 20, 2024</b>
Notification of Award	December 2024
Funding Begins	March 1, 2025*

\*Note: The Research Grant Agreement and Joint Funding Agreement between the Applicant, Host Institution and/ or Sponsor(s) must be negotiated and executed before the “Funding Begins” date of March 1, 2025.

## How to Apply

Please note that this funding opportunity includes a Registration Form and a Full Application stage. Applicants must submit a Registration Form to be eligible to submit a Full Application. **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.** Brain Canada will acknowledge receipt of the Registration Forms and Full Applications within two business days.

## Registration Form

**Stream 1 and Stream 2:** Please click [here](#) to download the Registration Form.

Please send the completed Registration Form, along with the required attachments, as one PDF file to [platformgrant@braincanada.ca](mailto:platformgrant@braincanada.ca). **Registration Forms received in any other format, exceeding the word and page limits, incomplete, or late, will be rejected.**

## Applicant Information

Brain Canada has implemented a demographic survey to evaluate the progress of programs in fostering EDI. Please note that the survey will be sent via email, upon confirmation of the applicant’s submission of the Registration Form. The information collected will not be shared in an identifiable form with the public, external stakeholders (e.g., Health Canada, funding partners, etc.), 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](#).

## Platform Overview

- Title of proposal;
- Estimated total research grant amount;
- Up to 10 key words describing the platform;
- Provide a description of the platform and how it will be used to advance research in neuroscience,

and the impact of the platform on the field; include an explanation of the special services, capabilities, or expertise that the platform will offer to researchers and the scope of the platform (e.g., local, regional, national, international). Explain how the data or resources acquired, curated, or analyzed by the platform will be made available to other qualified researchers (maximum 500 words).

### Attachments

- Letters of support from potential sponsor(s).
  - The letters do not have to be accompanied by a formal funding commitment at this stage but should highlight the interest of the potential sponsor(s) in supporting the platform by explaining why it is important to them, the likely uptake of the research results, and the overall impact of the platform (maximum 1-page per letter).

### Optional Information

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

***To view the specific Criteria for Assessment and Full Application components for each stream, please use the following hyperlinks for [Stream 1](#) and [Stream 2](#).***

## 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 researchers within Canada and internationally with 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 to Brain Canada 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. Funding will be allocated to applications from each stream in descending order of merit, until the dedicated funds are exhausted, or all recommended applications are funded. Brain Canada will not entertain appeals against the assessment of the Peer Review Panel.

## Confidentiality and Ownership

Brain Canada Foundation will keep all materials submitted for this funding opportunity confidential, and only share them with reviewers, Peer Review Panel members, and observers who have signed

confidentiality and non-disclosure agreements.

Brain Canada does not claim ownership of intellectual property (IP) arising from the research they fund and expects 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. Platform team members must resolve IP ownership issues with sponsors **before** submitting the application. Where the sponsor is a for-profit entity, Brain Canada must be consulted to determine if the IP arrangements are acceptable as this will be a component of the Joint Funding Agreement.

## Communications

Recipients of the *2024 Platform Support Grants* must make every effort to attend events organized by Brain Canada, and present their projects, if applicable, to demonstrate the implications and importance of their research. They may also be requested to participate in other knowledge exchange activities, such as podcasts, interviews, etc. Once the funding period is completed, recipients should continue to keep Brain Canada up to date on the impact of their funded platform.

## Contact Information

For more information, or if you have any questions regarding the application process, please contact Brain Canada at [platformgrant@braincanada.ca](mailto:platformgrant@braincanada.ca).

## Stream 1

Stream 1 focuses on supporting the establishment and/or advancement of research platforms. **This stream is designed for platforms that are either in the development phase or already established but have not previously received funding through Brain Canada's Platform Support Grants program.** The aim is to support innovative, high-impact platforms that contribute to advancing research capabilities in the neurosciences, addressing a critical gap, and fostering collaboration in the field.

### Stream 1: Criteria for Assessment

#### **Innovation and Potential for Impact**

a) ***Quality and impact of the platform being proposed.***

The platform enables researchers to undertake innovative research and generate results that:

- contribute to the advancement of theory and concept, or lead to the development of new approaches for prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of neurological and mental illnesses;
- could not have been conducted in its absence, except at much greater cost (i.e., by duplicating existing infrastructure) and with significant delay;
- enhance Canada's capacity in neuroscience research by facilitating user access to the platform and/or improve its operational capabilities, quality, or capacity;
- have an impact (e.g., reduce the burden of disease, improve quality of life, and/or stimulate economic development in Canada);
- will stimulate intersectoral (e.g., university/industry, university/health care service) or international collaboration; linkages to other databases, repositories, biobanks, and registries are described.

b) ***Distinctiveness of the platform.*** The platform is unique in its capabilities within the nation, region, or locality.

c) ***Sex, Gender and Diversity Considerations.*** Incorporation of sex, gender and diversity considerations in the design and execution of research is critically important for broadening the potential impact of the work and the potential for new knowledge to be translated into health benefits for all. As such, the application clearly demonstrates how sex, gender and diversity considerations (SGBA+ and EDI) will be integrated in the development and/or use of the platform and considered in the composition of team members, collaborators, end users, and stakeholders of the platform.

d) ***Open Science.*** The platform makes scientific information available to all and encourages knowledge translation. The scientific research outputs of the platform are "FAIR" (i.e., Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable), promote open education, open access publications, open data and materials, etc., and address barriers to access. The platform adopts a sustainable approach with concrete steps forward and commitment for Open Science so that, subject to applicable laws and regulations, its data and specimens will be useful and accessible to the neuroscience community including stakeholders, researchers, clinicians, and end users. *Applications for support of repositories, databases, and registries which contain personal health information must explain how their platform conforms to the relevant ethical guidelines.*

## **Platform Feasibility**

### **a) *Management of the platform.***

- The governance and organizational structure are strong, effective, and widely understood by users;
- There is an equitable and user-friendly process for access, and users receive training and assistance, allowing them to use the platform and its services in the most efficient, safe, and economical fashion;
- There is regular budget planning for operations and maintenance, and for technical modifications to keep pace with scientific progress;
- For established platforms, users attest to the smooth operation and minimum downtime of the platform and know how to communicate suggestions and concerns to the responsive operators;
- The operation of the platform is reviewed or audited regularly against defined performance benchmarks and identified deficiencies are corrected.

b) **Budget.** The amount of funding requested is in-line with the scope of the proposal and there is a clear plan for budgeting and disbursement of funds across the grant period.

## **Long-Term Value and Sustainability of the Platform**

a) ***A plan for the future growth of the platform.*** The application includes a plan for how the team will leverage the proposed research plan to ensure the platform's growth over time, while accounting for the long-term value of the platform beyond the impact, outcomes, and collaborations initially proposed. In addition, there is a clear statement for how the team will ensure that the knowledge acquired through the platform will be mobilized.

b) ***Sustainable commitment to platform support.*** The application is clear on the extent to which the platform, or the components that will be coordinated or integrated using the current Platform Support Grant, is/are supported through other sources. There are explicit commitments from the other funding partners of the platform and interest from external stakeholders. There is a credible plan for sustaining the platform after the completion of Brain Canada funding.

## **Stream 1: Full Application**

Full Applications must be submitted using Brain Canada's electronic grant management system, SmartSimple; access will be granted upon invitation to the Full Application stage.

The Full Application will need to be formatted using 12-point Times New Roman or 10-point Arial font, single-spaced, on a letter-size page with 1" minimum margins. The font size for figures and legends must be a minimum of 10 points. Use of a condensed font and spacing is not permitted. Applications received in any other format, exceeding the page limits, incomplete, or late, will be rejected.

### **1. Platform Overview**

- Title of proposal;
- Up to 10 key words describing the platform;
- A description of the platform (maximum 500 words), including:
  - description of the special services, capabilities, or expertise the platform will offer to researchers and the scope of the platform (e.g., local, regional, national, international);
  - an overview of the scope of research the platform will enable;

- how the platform will advance the fields of neuroscience and mental health and the anticipated impact on these fields;
- explanation of how the data or resources acquired, curated, or analyzed by the platform will be made available to other qualified researchers with appropriate safeguards, as needed.

## 2. Lay Summary (maximum 300 words)

- Suitable for publication and understandable by the general public.

## 3. Proposal (maximum 10 pages, excluding figures and references)

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

- An **overview** of the platform, including a description of the services, capabilities, or expertise the platform will offer and the scope of the platform (e.g., local, regional, national, international).
- The **rationale** for the proposed platform, including:
  - The significance of the platform, including the needs and priorities it will address within the research community; demonstrate the demand from the research community for the equipment, services, resources, scientific and technical personnel, etc. offered by the platform.
  - The unique features and capabilities of the platform within the national, regional, and/or local context, including how the platform compares to existing infrastructure or facilities.
  - Description of the scope and nature of the research that will be enabled by the platform; clearly state how the platform contributes to enhancing Canada's capacity in neuroscience research.
  - The added value of the Platform Support Grant funding in improving the platform's accessibility, performance, and reach to the neuroscience research community.
- The **expected outcomes and outputs** of the platform, including:
  - How the research enabled by the platform will contribute to the advancement of knowledge or lead to the development of new approaches for prevention, diagnosis, and/or treatment of neurological and mental illnesses.
  - Plans for making data and scientific research outputs of the platform available, including concrete steps and commitment toward Open Science.
  - Potential for intersectoral and international partnerships between collaborators from different sectors, countries, and socioeconomic backgrounds who intend to use the platform.
  - Knowledge mobilization plans 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. Applicants are encouraged to visit CIHR's [Guide to Knowledge Translation Planning](#).
  - The expected broad impacts of the results - refer to the main impact categories: advancing knowledge, building capacity, informing decision-making, health impacts, and broad economic and social impacts.
  - Mechanisms to track and measure the outcomes enabled by the platform.
- Description of the **training opportunities** and **skills acquired** by trainees and other highly

qualified personnel (HQP) involved in the platform, as applicable.

- Plan for the **future growth** of the platform, including how the team will leverage the proposed research plan to ensure growth over time, while accounting for the long-term value of the platform. Plans for maintaining, securing, and diversifying sources of funding for the sustainability of the platform.
- Optional: Proposal for a **research project** that will be enabled by the platform, demonstrating the capability, utility, and value of the platform. Applicants are asked to clearly delineate the research project proposal within the 10-page “Proposal” section of their application, if applicable. *Please note that expenses for the proposed research project cannot exceed one quarter (25%) of the total research grant amount.*

#### 4. **Research Plan and Timeline** (maximum 5 pages, excluding the timeline and anticipated milestones Gantt chart)

Provide a **work plan**, including:

- A description of the overall objectives to be achieved by the end of the funding period, including the approaches that will be used to achieve the stated objectives. Milestones should be described for every six (6) months and must be accompanied by a set of metrics that can be evaluated to gauge progress.
- A description of potential risks and strategies to mitigate these risks.
- Given that yearly federal funding from Brain Canada to the Host Institution must be disbursed in accordance with the agreed upon payment schedule at the Research Grant Agreement stage, provide a description for how the governance and organizational structure of the platform will ensure seamless progression of the grant, in an effort to minimize delays with the proposed work plan and timeline.
- An outline of the specific contributions of any collaborators involved in the project.
- How the platform incorporates considerations for sex, gender, and diversity in both design and execution.
- In addition to the work plan, please include a 1-page timeline and anticipated milestones Gantt chart separately, which outlines the general timeline for the administrative period and the project within the funding period. A template will be provided at the Full Application stage.

#### 5. **Platform Management and Team Members**

- Describe the platform’s management structure, including governance and organizational, and identify the individuals in key roles. Please specify how the platform has integrated, or plans to integrate, equity, diversity, and inclusion principles to the composition of the platform team, including equitable access to the platform (maximum 2 pages).
  - Additional team members can be included, beyond those involved in the core management of the platform, provided they have an active and direct role in the development and/or execution of the platform and, if applicable, research project outlined in the application. Provide sufficient information to demonstrate the team encompasses the core competencies required to effectively manage and contribute toward the success of the platform.
- List the names and affiliations of each investigator of the platform, as well as their role in the proposed platform and, if applicable, research project.

- A biographical sketch for each member, outlining their qualifications and achievements (maximum 4 pages) must be submitted. A template will be provided at the Full Application stage.

## 6. Budget

Applicants must submit the following:

- A yearly budget, which includes the six (6) month administrative period, outlining the costs for each category of expenditure. A template will be provided at the Full Application stage.
  - Please note it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure all pre-populated cells in the budget template are functioning prior to submitting their application.
- A written budget justification for the proposed costs in each category of expenditure, including for the six (6) month administrative period (maximum 2 pages). Please provide sufficient information to allow reviewers to assess the suitability of the cost allocation. And, as needed, ensure it is clear where other sources of funding will support elements of the platform.

## 7. Institutional Approvals

Please outline the steps that will be taken during the six (6) month administrative period to ensure the project can begin within the first six (6) months of the March 1, 2025 start date. This section must also describe the timeline for any addendums or additional agreements or approvals specific to the proposal that may need to be added thereafter. This includes, but is not limited to, institutional agreements (e.g., sub-site agreements) and approvals (e.g., research ethics board approval) (maximum one page). 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.

## 8. Letters of Commitment - Sponsors

Sponsors must provide the Principal Investigator, before the Full Application deadline, official letters of commitment (maximum 1 page per sponsor). It is understood that this commitment is contingent on the application being recommended for funding, and the availability of matching by Brain Canada funds. If these contingencies are met, all sponsor(s) will be required to co-sign a Joint Funding Agreement consistent with the terms of the letter of commitment, the administrative checklist (see below), and with Brain Canada's funding terms.

- Please attach official letters of commitment from the sponsor(s) which clearly state:
  - Why the platform is important to them, the likely uptake of the research results, and the overall impact of the platform.
  - The specific amount of funding each sponsor is willing to invest in the project.
  - A declaration of real or perceived conflicts of interest, if any.

Any other letters of support (i.e., from collaborators, team members, etc.) will not be accepted. **Importantly, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure all required specifications are included in each sponsor's letter.**

## 9. Administrative Checklist - Sponsors

Brain Canada's current Contribution Agreement with the Government of Canada, through Health Canada, for the Canada Brain Research Fund, requires that Year 1 federal funding from Brain Canada must be disbursed by March 31, 2025. Applicants, sponsors, and the Host Institutions are expected to work with Brain Canada to ensure a Joint Funding Agreement and Research Grant Agreement are executed in a timely manner, by the March 1, 2025 start date, **subject to the risk of forfeiting the awarded grant.**



To ensure that sponsors are made aware of important timelines and requirements related to the *2024 Platform Support Grants* program, Brain Canada is asking the sponsors involved in each application at the Full Application stage to acknowledge specific information that will help expedite the Joint Funding Agreement signature process should the application in question be recommended for funding.

The checklist is provided in the [“Sponsored Opportunity Package”](#) and will also be provided through Brain Canada’s grant management system at the Full Application stage.

## 10. Certification and Signatures

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

- Signature of the Principal Investigator
- Institutional Signature: Signature of the responsible official of the institution where the Principal Investigator is based.

## Stream 2

Stream 2 is open to platforms that have previously received funding through Brain Canada's Platform Support Grants program. Please note that for Platform Support Grants that are currently ongoing, no more than 5% of the total research grant amount from the existing grant can remain unspent as of March 1, 2025. In addition, this amount must be completely spent down, including any No-Cost Extensions, within the first six (6) months of the March 1, 2025 start date.

The aim is to support the continued sustainability and advancement of previously funded platforms by addressing evolving needs, expanding capabilities, and/or maximizing their contribution to the research community. Platforms applying through Stream 2 can maintain status quo (i.e., they don't necessarily need to be expanded upon), but strong evidence for how they continue to address a unique and critical need, how they meet the Criteria for Assessment, and the continued value the platform brings to the neuroscience research community must be demonstrated.

### Stream 2: Criteria for Assessment

#### Track Record and Achievements

- a) **Outcomes and impact achieved by the platform to date.** The platform optimally utilized the previous funding and achieved significant impact as demonstrated by:
- the successful establishment, implementation, and/or improvements of the platform as initially planned, including strong governance;
  - ease of access and large adoption by members of the research community and other stakeholders, formation of collaborations, economic impact, and continued relevance to the community;
  - strong evidence supporting the need for additional funding from Brain Canada and sponsors, justified by the successes, challenges and mitigation strategies of implementing the sustainability plan from the original Platform Support Grant;
  - major contributions to neuroscience research, which may encompass knowledge mobilization, training and engagement of highly qualified personnel, influence on decision-making, significant advancements in the field, and more.

#### Innovation and Continued Impact

- a) **Quality and impact of the platform being proposed.**

The platform remains relevant and continues to enable researchers to undertake innovative research and generate results that:

- contribute to the advancement of theory and concept, or lead to the development of new approaches for prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of neurological and mental illnesses;
- could not have been conducted in its absence, except at much greater cost (i.e., by duplicating existing infrastructure) and with significant delay;
- enhance Canada's capacity in neuroscience research by facilitating user access to the platform and/or improve its operational capabilities, quality, or capacity;
- have an impact (e.g., reduce the burden of disease, improve quality of life, and/or stimulate economic development in Canada);
- will stimulate intersectoral (e.g., university/industry, university/health care service) or international collaboration; linkages to other databases, repositories, biobanks, and registries are described.

- b) **Distinctiveness of the platform.** The platform continues to remain unique in its capabilities within the nation, region, or locality.
- c) **Sex, Gender and Diversity Considerations.** Incorporation of sex, gender and diversity considerations in the design and execution of research is critically important for broadening the potential impact of the work and the potential for new knowledge to be translated into health benefits for all. As such, the application clearly demonstrates how sex, gender and diversity considerations (SGBA+ and EDI) will be integrated in the expansion and/or continued use of the platform and considered in the composition of team members, collaborators, end users, and stakeholders of the platform.
- d) **Open Science.** The platform makes scientific information available to all and encourages knowledge translation. The scientific research outputs of the platform are “FAIR” (i.e., Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable), promote open education, open access publications, open data and materials, etc., and address barriers to access. The platform adopts a sustainable approach with concrete steps forward and commitment for Open Science so that, subject to applicable laws and regulations, its data and specimens will be useful and accessible to the neuroscience community including stakeholders, researchers, clinicians, and end users. *Applications for support of repositories, databases, and registries which contain personal health information must explain how their platform conforms to the relevant ethical guidelines.*

### **Platform Feasibility**

- a) **Management of the platform.**
- Clear demonstration that the governance and organizational structure remain strong, effective, and widely understood by users;
  - There is an equitable and user-friendly process for access, and users receive training and assistance, allowing them to use the platform and its services in the most efficient, safe, and economical fashion;
  - There is regular budget planning for operations and maintenance, and for technical modifications to keep pace with scientific progress;
  - Users attest to the smooth operation and minimum down-time of the platform and know how to communicate suggestions and concerns to the responsive operators;
  - The operation of the platform is reviewed or audited regularly against defined performance benchmarks and identified deficiencies are corrected.
- b) **Budget.** The amount of funding requested is in-line with the scope of the proposal and there is a clear plan for budgeting and disbursement of funds across the grant period.

### **Long-Term Value and Sustainability of the Platform**

- a) **A plan for the continued growth of the platform.** The application includes a plan for how the team will leverage the proposed research plan to ensure the platform’s continued growth over time, while accounting for the long-term value of the platform beyond the impact, outcomes and collaborations proposed. In addition, there is a clear statement for how the team will ensure that the knowledge acquired through the platform will be mobilized.

- b) **Sustainable commitment to platform support.** The application is clear on the extent to which the platform, or the components that will be coordinated or integrated using the current Platform Support Grant, is/are supported through other sources. There are explicit commitments from the other funding partners of the platform and interest from external stakeholders. There is a credible plan for sustaining the platform after the completion of Brain Canada funding.

## Stream 2: Full Application

Full Applications must be submitted using Brain Canada's electronic grant management system, SmartSimple; access will be granted upon invitation to the Full Application stage.

The Full Application will need to be formatted using 12-point Times New Roman or 10-point Arial font, single-spaced, on a letter-size page with 1" minimum margins. The font size for figures and legends must be a minimum of 10 points. Use of a condensed font and spacing is not permitted. Applications received in any other format, exceeding the page limits, incomplete, or late, will be rejected.

### 1. Platform Overview

- Title of proposal;
- Up to 10 key words describing the platform;
- A description of the platform (maximum 500 words), including:
  - description of the special services, capabilities, or expertise the platform offers, or will offer, to researchers and the scope of the platform (e.g., local, regional, national, international);
  - an overview of the scope of research the platform enables;
  - how the platform advances the fields of neuroscience and mental health and the anticipated impact on these fields;
  - explanation of how the data or resources acquired, curated, or analyzed by the platform are made available to other qualified researchers with appropriate safeguards, as needed.

### 2. Lay Summary (maximum 300 words)

- Suitable for publication and understandable by the general public.

### 3. Platform Evolution and Impact (maximum 4 pages, excluding figures and references)

Provide an overview of the objectives and aims of the previous PSG funding, outlining the progress made in executing the proposal and achieving milestones. Describe the outcomes and outputs of the platform and associated research to date, and the impact achieved. Additionally, describe any developments that have led to the current state of the platform, informing the basis of this application.

### 4. Proposal (maximum 10 pages, excluding figures and references)

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

- An **overview** of the platform, including a description of the services, capabilities, or expertise the platform offers, or will offer, and the scope of the platform (e.g., local, regional, national, international). Please ensure to specify what elements of the proposal are new to the platform, if any.
- The **rationale** for the proposed platform, including:
  - The significance of the platform, including the needs and priorities it addresses within the

research community; demonstrate the demand from the research community for the equipment, services, resources, scientific and technical personnel, etc. offered by the platform.

- The unique features and capabilities of the platform within the national, regional, and/or local context, including how the platform compares to existing infrastructure or facilities.
  - Description of the scope and nature of the research that will be enabled by the platform; clearly state how the platform contributes to enhancing Canada's capacity in neuroscience research.
  - The added value of the Platform Support Grant funding in improving the platform's accessibility, performance, and reach to the neuroscience research community.
- The **expected outcomes and outputs** of the platform, including:
    - How the research enabled by the platform will contribute to the advancement of knowledge or lead to the development of new approaches for prevention, diagnosis, and/or treatment of neurological and mental illnesses.
    - Plans for making data and scientific research outputs of the platform available, including concrete steps and continued commitment toward Open Science.
    - Potential for intersectoral and international partnerships between collaborators from different sectors, countries, and socioeconomic backgrounds who intend to use the platform.
    - Knowledge mobilization plans 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. Applicants are encouraged to visit CIHR's [Guide to Knowledge Translation Planning](#).
    - The expected broad impacts of the results - refer to the main impact categories: advancing knowledge, building capacity, informing decision-making, health impacts, and broad economic and social impacts.
    - Mechanisms to track and measure the outcomes enabled by the platform.
  - Description of the **training opportunities** and **skills acquired** by trainees and other highly qualified personnel (HQP) involved in the platform, as applicable.
  - Plan for **continued growth** of the platform, including how the team will leverage the proposed research plan to ensure growth over time, while accounting for the long-term value of the platform. Plans for maintaining, securing, and diversifying sources of funding for the sustainability of the platform.
  - Optional: Only for existing platforms that are expanding their capabilities, proposal for a **research project** that will be enabled by the expansion of the platform, demonstrating the new capabilities, utility, and value of the platform. Applicants are asked to clearly delineate the research project proposal within the 10-page "Proposal" section of their application, if applicable. *Please note that expenses for the proposed research project cannot exceed one quarter (25%) of the total research grant amount.*

**5. Research Plan and Timeline** (maximum 5 pages, excluding the timeline and anticipated milestones Gantt chart)

Provide a **work plan**, including:

- A description of the overall objectives to be achieved by the end of the funding period, including the approaches that will be used to achieve the stated objectives. Milestones should be described for every six (6) months and must be accompanied by a set of metrics that can be evaluated to gauge progress.
- A description of potential risks and strategies to mitigate these risks.
- Given that yearly federal funding from Brain Canada to the Host Institution must be disbursed in accordance with the agreed upon payment schedule at the Research Grant Agreement stage, provide a description for how the governance and organizational structure of the platform will ensure seamless progression of the grant, in an effort to minimize delays with the proposed work plan and timeline.
- An outline of the specific contributions of any collaborators involved in the project.
- How the platform incorporates considerations for sex, gender, and diversity in both design and execution.
- In addition to the work plan, please include a 1-page timeline and anticipated milestones Gantt chart separately, which outlines the general timeline for the administrative period and project within the funding period. A template will be provided at the Full Application stage.

## 6. Platform Management and Team Members

- Describe the current management structure, including governance and organizational, and identify the individuals in key roles. Please specify how the platform has integrated, or plans to integrate, equity, diversity, and inclusion principles to the composition of the platform team, including equitable access to the platform (maximum 2 pages).
  - Additional team members can be included, beyond those involved in the core management of the platform, provided they have an active and direct role in the development and/or execution of the platform and, if applicable, research project outlined in the application. Provide sufficient information to demonstrate the team encompasses the core competencies required to effectively manage and contribute toward the success of the platform.
- List the names and affiliations of each investigator of the platform, as well as their role in the proposed platform and, if applicable, research project.
- A biographical sketch for each member, outlining their qualifications and achievements (maximum 4 pages) must be submitted. A template will be provided at the Full Application stage.

## 7. Budget

Applicants must submit the following:

- A yearly budget, which includes the six (6) month administrative period, outlining the costs for each category of expenditure. A template will be provided at the Full Application stage.
  - Please note it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure all pre-populated cells in the budget template are functioning prior to submitting their application.
- A written budget justification for the proposed costs in each category of expenditure, including for the six (6) month administrative period (maximum 2 pages). Please provide sufficient information to allow reviewers to assess the suitability of the cost allocation. And, as needed, ensure it is clear where other sources of funding will support elements of the platform.
- For Platform Support Grants that are currently ongoing, no more than 5% of the total research grant amount from the existing grant can remain unspent as of March 1, 2025. In addition, this amount must be completely spent down, including any No-Cost Extensions, within the first six (6) months of the March 1, 2025 start date. If applicable, please provide a budget forecast

demonstrating and confirming how the remaining grant funds will be spent down within the first six (6) months of the March 1, 2025 start date. A template will be provided at the Full Application stage.

## 8. Institutional Approvals

Please outline the steps that will be taken during the six (6) month administrative period to ensure the project can begin within the first six (6) months of the March 1, 2025 start date. This section must also describe the timeline for any addendums or additional agreements or approvals specific to the proposal that may need to be added thereafter. This includes, but is not limited to, institutional agreements (e.g., sub-site agreements) and approvals (e.g., research ethics board approval) (maximum one page). 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.

## 9. Letters of Commitment - Sponsors

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