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REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Issued By:

Parkinson Canada in partnership with Brain Canada

2025 C-OPN Data Challenge

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BACKGROUND

The main goal of the Canadian Open Parkinson Network (C-OPN) is to facilitate and accelerate Parkinson’s research. Brain Canada and Parkinson Canada have co-funded and partnered with C-OPN since 2018. To date, C-OPN has recruited over 2,300 participants and created a large nationwide database that includes de-identified participant data concerning demographics, symptoms, treatment approaches, standardized clinical assessments, neuroimaging data, genotyping for Parkinson’s gene variants, and a biobank of samples for further analysis of DNA, PBMCs and blood serum/plasma from study participants. These resources are open and accessible to researchers, clinicians and trainees in Canada and around the world, to help them answer their research questions in a faster and broader manner than would be possible if they were working solely out of their host institution or clinic.

To inspire greater use of the C-OPN database, we are launching an open data challenge to Parkinson’s researchers and clinicians across Canada to leverage the available **C-OPN de-identified database (including imaging and genotyping datasets) only**. Interested applicants are invited to submit funding proposals for research projects that will gain new

insights into Parkinson's diagnosis, progression or advancements in care. Up to 4 funding proposals from the data challenge will be eligible for funding of up to \$50,000 each, to support these exploratory research projects, with a trajectory for further research studies and larger funding grants. To better understand the data and resources available for analysis, we encourage all interested applicants to please visit the [C-OPN website](#), reach out to the National Manager (national.manager@copn-rpco.ca), and to make your data access requests as early as possible to better inform your funding proposals.

Below are a few examples of research questions that could be addressed using the resources in the database, but is not limited to:

- stratification of the Parkinson's population into different subgroups to improve diagnosis, inform personalized therapeutic strategies and help with the design of future clinical trials.
- effectiveness and/or usage trends of different medications and other treatment modalities for management of Parkinson's for different types of participants (E.g. male vs. female, presence of other co-morbidities, clinical stage, etc.).
- analysis of trends and potential barriers to accessing device-aided therapies for Parkinson's.

FUNDS AVAILABLE

A total of \$200,000 CAD is available in the competition to be awarded to the top 4 funding proposals. Successful grants are eligible for funding up to **\$50,000 each** for a one-year term.

Final budgets of the successful projects will be based on the proposed work in the application, and the proposed budget and budget justification documents.

The grant funds may be used to cover the costs incurred within Canada of research staff, materials and consumables, services or software costs, equipment (max. of \$10,000), and publication costs for open science journals. Grant funds may not be used for institutional overhead costs, or travel to meetings/conferences.

To standardize budget submissions for all applicants, budget templates (Excel file) will be provided on the Parkinson Canada application website (SMAApply). All applicants will be required to use the provided template to complete their proposed budget; applications that do not use this template may be disqualified.

ELIGIBILITY

Applications will be accepted from researchers, scholars, and health professionals conducting Parkinson's research in Canada. The applicant must be a researcher who has completed formal training in health-related research. Applicants must have a research appointment and employment relationship with an approved institution. This research appointment must:

- allow the applicant to hold grant funding, pursue the proposed research project, to supervise trainees and to publish the results of their research.
- require the applicant to conform to institutional regulations concerning the conduct of research, the supervision of trainees and the employment conditions of trainees and/or support staff paid from the grant.

Applicants must be affiliated with and conduct research at an eligible: Canadian post-secondary institution or their affiliated institutions (including hospitals and research institutes). Applications are encouraged to be team-based and include two or more independent investigators from different institutions, or distinct research groups within the same institution.

Applicants and co-applicants that hold a research appointment, as described above, are prohibited from receiving the payment of a salary, stipend, honorarium, or any similar form of compensation from any Parkinson Canada or Brain Canada grant. Post-doctoral fellows or trainees are not eligible to apply for funding under this Program.

DEADLINES AND IMPORTANT DATES

Item	Projected Date
Data Challenge launch	May 29, 2025
Informational webinar*	June 17, 2025
Deadline to submit registration form to <i>Parkinson Canada</i>	July 14, 2025 (5:00 pm ET)
Deadline to submit data access request to <i>C-OPN</i>	July 21, 2025
Deadline for full funding proposal to <i>Parkinson Canada</i>	July 28, 2025 (5:00 pm ET)
Review of proposals	Aug. – Sept., 2025
Award Notification & begin payment	Sept. 26, 2025

Note*: to participate in the informational webinar, please send an email to ko.currie@parkinson.ca for an invitation.

REVIEW PROCESS

The evaluation of Applications submitted to Parkinson Canada will be completed through a peer review process. An external panel of Scientific Reviewers will be assembled, and will be composed of prominent neurologists, neurosurgeons, and neuroscientists. Parkinson Canada will leverage its Scientific Advisory Council (SAC) and Trainee Awards Committee (TAC), who are responsible for the evaluation of grant applications in our Annual Research Competition to recruit scientific reviewers for this data challenge. External reviewers will be solicited for additional expertise as needed. The peer review process is a cornerstone of Parkinson Canada’s research program and provides for the highest quality of objective adjudication, to rate each of the applications so that they may be ranked in order of priority for funding by Parkinson Canada. The Scientific Reviewers

chosen to evaluate applications will not have any operational, strategic or leadership role with C-OPN, and application assignments will be handled according to our standard conflict-of-interest policies.

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

REVIEW CRITERIA

The principal consideration used to evaluate applications is research excellence potential. There are, however, a variety of additional criteria that may be considered in the evaluation process. Each of the criteria listed below will be considered in assigning the overall ranking of the Application, weighting them as indicated for each Application.

Relevance of using C-OPN Resources (30%)

- Is the research question relevant, appropriately using and capitalizing on the C-OPN resources?
 - E.g. is the project leveraging data from multiple sites (if available), versus only data from a single site?
- If funded, will this project help enhance awareness and raise the profile of C-OPN through publications, new resources or other project outcomes?

Proposed Budget, Project Feasibility & Methodology (35%)

- Is the proposed budget reasonable and adequately justified in the application? Will the proposed budget be sufficient to carry out the research to address the project's scientific aims?
- Are the applicant's conceptual framework, design, methods, and analyses adequately developed, well integrated, and appropriate? Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternative tactics?
- Is the research team well suited to carry out this work? Is the work proposed appropriate to the experience level of the applicant and other team members (if any)?
- Does the applicant have a strong training and publication history in the area of the proposed project, or in another field that can be applied to Parkinson's?

Impact of Project (35%)

- Does the project contribute to Canada's leadership potential in Parkinson's knowledge in that field? Where does this work position itself in relation to world knowledge of Parkinson's at this time?
- Will the project advance the understanding of Parkinson's and move the field forward?
- If successful, do the specific objectives of the project lead to measurable improvements in the lives of people affected by Parkinson's?
- Can the results of the proposed project potentially lead to new lines of inquiry, novel findings, and potential follow-on studies that build on the outcomes?

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Applicants must submit a registration form via email to Ko Currie, Research Funding and Partnerships Manager (ko.currie@parkinson.ca) by **July 14, 2025 (5:00 pm ET)** in order to be eligible to submit a funding proposal. Following an administrative check and relevance review, applicants deemed eligible will be invited to submit an application.

Full applications are submitted online through the Parkinson Canada online application system called SMaply. It can be accessed through the following link which is also available on the Parkinson Canada website at <https://parkinsoncan.smapply.io/>. **The deadline to submit applications is July 28, 2025 (5:00 pm ET).**

Important note on document formatting: When preparing your application, all application documents to be uploaded must have page margins of **1 inch minimum (2.54 cm)** and use **12-point font** (Times New Roman, Arial or Calibri). Failing to follow these instructions may negatively impact the evaluation of your application and could lead to it being disqualified.

Applications for data challenge grants include the following:

- 1) **Project Summary:** Please state in **500 words or less** (600 words French) the scientific or clinical question being asked, the methods you will use to address it, and the expected outcome. (To save space, you do not need to include basic information such as the description of Parkinson's disease)
- 2) **Project Impact Statement:** Please describe your project and how it will impact the lives of Canadians affected by Parkinson's using language for a general audience (**500 words max**; 600 words French). This section will be scored by Lived Experience Expert Reviewers (whose score accounts for 10% of the overall application). Applicants should use the following subheadings to organize their statement:
 - **Background** – what is the current state of research for your project?
 - **Hypothesis/Research Question** – what do you hope to learn?
 - **Methodology** – what tools and techniques will be used?
 - **Impact** – how will the project outcome affect the lives of Canadians with Parkinson's and the research community (short-term and long-term)? Describe

the possible benefits to daily life or access to healthcare, and any new scientific resources that may be generated for future use.

- **Note:** if people affected by Parkinson's have been consulted and/or participated in the study design or knowledge translation planning, please describe their involvement here.

3) **Project Narrative: (4 pages max; 5 pages French)**, including:

- **Background** and preliminary data to support the research question
- **Hypothesis or expected research outcome** of the proposed work
- **Specific objectives** of the proposed studies
 - Applicants are encouraged to include an adequate, well-detailed justification of how the C-OPN database will be leveraged and interpreted to answer their research question.
 - Include an expected timeline for completing the project. Projects are expected to take one year or less to complete.
- **Methodology** of proposed research, including methods and procedures
- **Impact & Knowledge Translation Plan** and potential relevance of the research outcome to the lives of people affected by Parkinson's and to advancing the area of research.

Note 1: Only projects using the de-identified participant data (including imaging and genotyping data) are eligible for funding in this data challenge.

Note 2: The page limit applies only to the project narrative and does not include estimated budgets, references, biographical information, ethical approvals or other support documents.

4) **Budget:**

- Using the **budget template** (Excel spreadsheet) provided on the application website, show all significant expenses of the project, such as
 - **Salaries** (trainees and support staff)
 - **Equipment** (max. of 20% of total budget – up to \$10,000)
 - **Reagents & consumables**
 - **Services and software costs**
 - **Publication fees** for open science journals.
- A separate **budget justification document** (max 1 page) will be required and must include sufficient detail on the proposed budget, to allow reviewers to make judgements about the amount of funds necessary to conduct the project.

5) **Biographical information** of the applicant and any co-applicants (using the Parkinson Canada biographical sketch form – for Principal Investigators). 4 pages maximum for each biographical sketch form.

6) **Proof of data access request submitted to C-OPN**

- At the application submission deadline, the applicant must provide proof that a data access request has been submitted and approved by C-OPN relating to your funding proposal. To be uploaded as a pdf file.
- Data access requests typically have a one-week turnaround.

- 7) **Relevant and reasonable support materials**, including but not limited to photographs, literature references, maximum **two (2)** publications, letters of collaboration and appendices may be included. Applicants are encouraged to include copies of any assessment scales referred to in their proposals.

Applications may be submitted in either English or French, and French-speaking reviewers will be made available for any applications that are submitted in French. In accordance with CIHR guidelines and evidence that documents written in French require more space than similar documents written in English, we will grant longer page/word allowances for applications written fully in French. French-speaking applicants may also ask to have any application guides and materials translated into French.

C-OPN DATA & RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR ANALYSIS IN DATA CHALLENGE

As of May 2025, a total of 2318 participants have been recruited into the C-OPN cohort, through the 11 clinic sites across Canada. This study cohort consists mainly of people living with Parkinson's (84%) but also includes healthy controls (11.4%) and some people with atypical Parkinsonism (4.6%).

We encourage any researchers that are interested in applying to the data challenge to get in contact with the C-OPN National Manager as early as possible via email (national.manager@copn-rpco.ca) to learn more about the data that is available for your research projects, and to get earlier access to your relevant data packages, to help design and write your funding proposals.

Below is a list of some of the relevant data and resources available within the de-identified C-OPN database:

Demographic Data – from 2172 study participants

- Sex
- Age (at study visit)
- Education Level

Epidemiological Data – from 2117 study participants

- Environmental factors (*history of living near factory or farm, exposure to pesticides or welding materials*)
- Exercise routine
- Substance use history and consumption (*tobacco, alcohol, coffee, cannabis, recreational drugs*)
- History of contact sports and/or head trauma
- Sleep history
- Pain history
- Family history of Parkinson's

Clinical Data – from 1891 study participants

- Diagnosis confirmation and age of onset
- Parkinson Plus Syndrome (MSA/PSP/CBS/DLB/FTD/ET/RBD)
- Hoehn and Yahr
- First symptoms (*tremor, muscle stiffness, bradykinesia, etc.*)
- Current symptoms
- Presence of other non-motor symptoms (*sleep issues, constipation, loss of smell, etc.*)
- Psychiatric disorders (*anxiety, depression, hallucinations*)
- Cognitive impairment
- Current medications

Results from Clinical Assessments

Available from all clinic sites

- MoCA (*Montreal Cognitive Assessment tool – to detect Mild Cognitive Impairment*)
 - 1871 assessments from participants
- MDS-UPDRS (*standardized rating scale to measure severity and progression of Parkinson's disease*)
 - 1426 assessments from participants

Available from some clinic sites

- MBI-C
- Parkinson Anxiety Scale
- Fatigue Severity Scale
- PDQ-8 & PDQ-39
- Multidimensional Caregiver Strain Index

Imaging Data – from 549 study participants

- MRI imaging data provided as BIDS files

Genotyping Data – from roughly 1300 study participants

- Presence of Parkinson's gene variants from de-identified participants

FAQ

Do I have to be a C-OPN member to get access to the database?

Yes, only C-OPN members can get access to the data and resources. Membership is free for all academic researchers and clinicians and trainees.

How do I get access to C-OPN data?

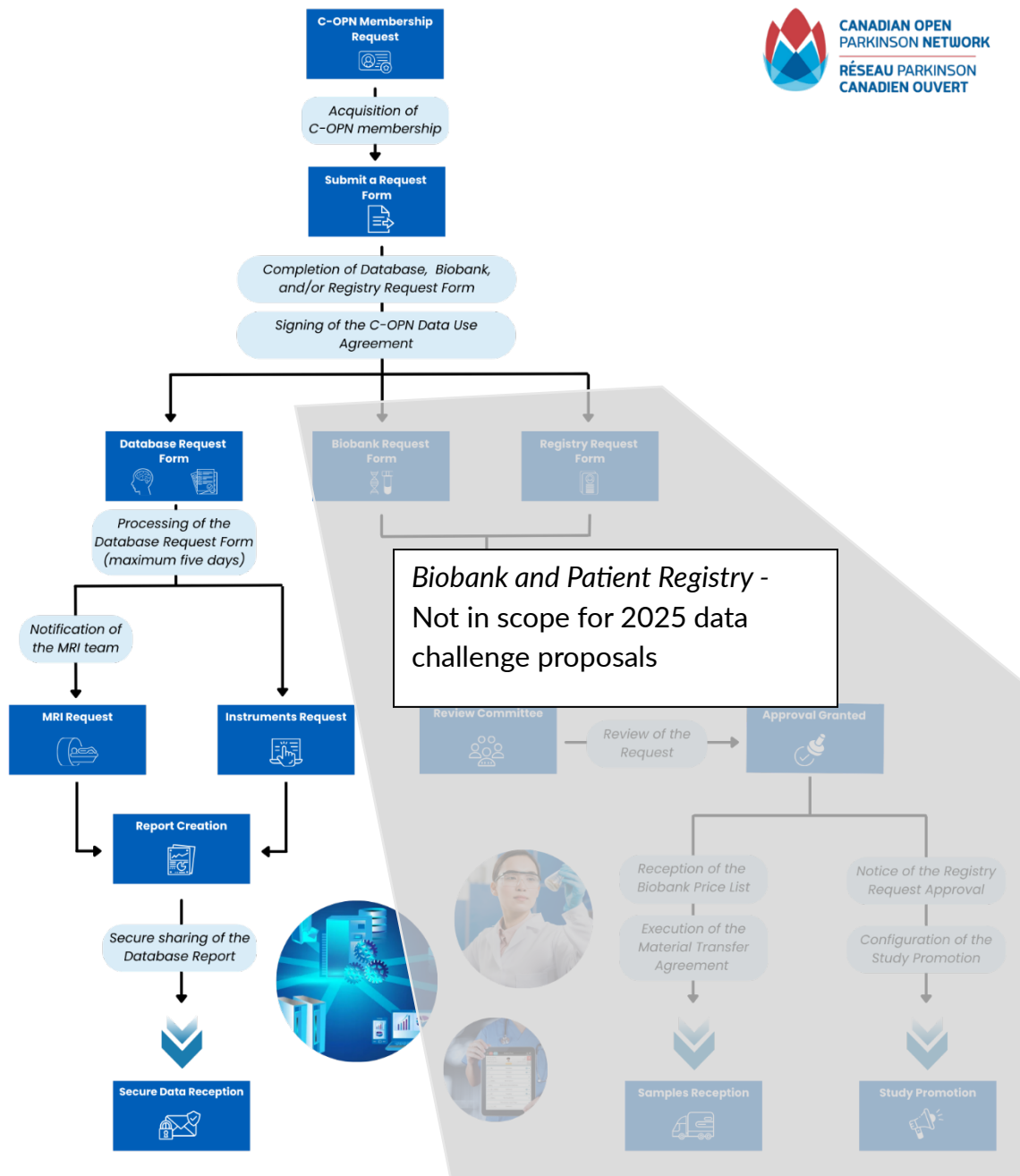
The data within C-OPN is available for free for C-OPN members (academic users). To get access to the data, please visit the C-OPN website ([Research - The Canadian Open Parkinson Network](#)) to input your data access request via their portal. You will be asked for some basic information such as your name, research institution, project title, and a

brief project description (150-200 words). Once your request has been reviewed and approved by the C-OPN National Manager, a custom data package will be prepared and sent to you. For more information, please see the workflow image below.

How long does it take to get access to data from C-OPN?

Typically, a data request is approved and your custom data package will be delivered within one week.

Data Access Workflow Diagram below:



FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information regarding the data challenge competition, feel free to email Ko Currie, Research Funding and Partnerships Manager, (ko.currie@parkinson.ca).

For more information regarding C-OPN and the data that is available, please visit the [C-OPN website](#) or email Anna Bendas, C-OPN National Manager (national.manager@copn-rpco.ca).