REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Issued By
Parkinson Canada

NEW INVESTIGATOR AWARD
(2027 Cycle)

Release Date:	**August 4, 2026**
Application Deadline (Online Receipt):	**October 5, 2026 (5:00pm EST)**
Notifications of Awards:	**March 2027**
Funding Start Date:	**July 1, 2027**
Duration of Award:	**3 years**

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Important Changes to the 2027 Competition

1. **Community Informed Research Priority Area**: Parkinson Canada will fund at least one project that is focused on movement and physical symptoms and at least one project that is focused on cognition and mental health. More details are provided below.
2. **Updated Team Member role definitions**: Updated definitions for team member roles have been introduced to improve clarity and consistency across applications. In addition, applicants are now required to clearly describe the specific role and contribution of each team member as part of their submission

3. **Lay Summary and Impact Statement**: New and revised application components have been introduced, including a required lay summary to support clear communication of research to a broad audience, as well as updates to the project impact and patient engagement statements to strengthen the emphasis on meaningful impact and engagement with people affected by Parkinson's.

BACKGROUND

Parkinson Canada is pleased to present the New Investigator Award Program (the "Program) as part of its revitalized Research Grant Program. Parkinson Canada offers this strategic initiative to provide investigators with an early opportunity, upon completing his or her research training, to develop and demonstrate his or her ability to initiate and conduct independent health research, as typically expected of university faculty members. Parkinson Canada anticipates that in the initial period of their independent careers, new investigators are in a good position to formulate innovative and fertile research projects. The Program is offered specifically to university faculty applicants who are currently in the **first five years** of their career as research scientists in Canada. An applicant will typically have completed one or two periods of post-doctoral training and will have a staff appointment that allows the applicant an opportunity to initiate and direct his or her own independent lines of research. The Program provides new researchers with an opportunity to enter into the area of Parkinson's research, without having to compete with established researchers for grant monies. Parkinson Canada wishes to encourage continued growth and revitalization in the field of Parkinson's research in Canada by supporting individual researchers in their professional development.

Parkinson Canada intends to provide awards for the support of projects with funding of up to **$45,000 per year over a three-year term** to outstanding applicants who meet the eligibility criteria of the Program and who have been approved by its Scientific Advisory Council (the "Advisory Council"). Funds awarded under the Program are to be used to cover operating expenses, technical support staff salaries and equipment costs for research grants in Parkinson's-related areas.

Parkinson Canada invites grant applications ("Applications") from applicants committed to conducting research in areas relevant to the cure, cause, prevention, improved treatment and/or understanding of Parkinson's disease, other related disorders including: Multiple System Atrophy (MSA), Progressive Supranuclear Palsy (PSP), other Parkinson's conditions and its implications on society. Parkinson Canada encourages Applications from the fields of biomedicine, health services and systems research, population studies, and clinical research.

The Program is available to individuals who propose to conduct research on the biomedical, clinical, health services and systems and population areas of Parkinson's. Parkinson Canada plans to adopt a flexible framework in funding awards under the Program.

RESEARCH THEMES OF PARKINSON CANADA

Parkinson Canada provides funding to support projects across all fields of research related to Parkinson's Disease. The following Research Themes (described below) have been developed for the purposes of internal tracking and reporting broadly on our research funding history and trends. In your application, you will be asked to choose a primary Research Theme which aligns with your project.

1) **Symptomatic Treatments:** treatments that ease outward symptoms of Parkinson's (e.g., medications for tremors).

2) **Disease Modifying Therapies:** treatments that target the underlying mechanisms of Parkinson's to interfere with disease progression (E.g. medical interventions targeting α-Synuclein aggregates).
3) **Diagnosis & Risk Factors:** understanding risk factors and predictors of Parkinson's for earlier diagnosis and intervention (e.g. biomarkers, genetic studies, etc.).
4) **Causes of Parkinson's:** understanding the physiological processes that lead to Parkinson's and its symptoms (ex. alpha-synuclein aggregation, mitochondrial dysfunction, etc.).
5) **Living Well with Parkinson's:** interventions, technologies, and programs to improve the quality of life (QoL) for people affected by Parkinson's and studies to understand barriers to better QoL (E.g. diet and exercise interventions).

FUNDS AVAILABLE

The Program offers awards for the support of projects with budgets of up to $45,000 per year over a three-year term to exceptional applicants who have been approved for funding by the Advisory Council.

To standardize budget submissions for all Pilot Project Grant applicants, budget templates (excel spreadsheet format) will now be provided on the Parkinson Canada website and in SMApply, and completion of the template will be required for all applications. **Applications that do not use the provided budget template will be disqualified from the competition.**

Applicants are prohibited from receiving the payment of a salary, stipend, honorarium, or any similar form of compensation from any Parkinson Canada grant. Post-doctoral fellows or trainees are not eligible to apply for funding under this Program. Applicants seeking a fellowship to support trainees at the graduate, postdoctoral level or clinical level should refer to Parkinson Canada's Fellowship Programs. If a trainee is successful in a Parkinson Canada award program and is named in the budget for a New Investigator Award application (for the same or very similar research project) the trainee award will be given precedence for funding, and the requested budget for their salary may be deemed an ineligible expense in the proposed budget.

COMMUNITY INFORMED RESEARCH PRIORITY AREA

Parkinson Canada is committed to ensuring that research reflects what matters most to the people it serves. This year, we surveyed members of the Parkinson's community, including people living with Parkinson's and their care partners, to better understand which areas of research they feel need more attention. The results of this survey are directly shaping our funding competition and two priority areas emerged from the community:

Movement and physical symptoms: This could include projects related to tremor, balance and falls, stiffness, freezing, gait, involuntary movements, fine motor skills, among other topics.

Cognition and mental health: This could include projects related to cognition, mild cognitive impairment, dementia, memory and concentration, stress, anxiety, depression, among other topics.

In the 2027 annual research competition, Parkinson Canada will fund at least one project that is focused on movement and physical symptoms and at least one project that is focused on cognition and mental health. Applications that do not explicitly address a research question focused on one of these two community-identified priority areas will not be considered under this funding priority.

ELIGIBILITY

Parkinson Canada is committed to supporting the most advanced and/or highest quality of Parkinson's research in Canada. As such, Applications will be accepted from individuals who are representative of a broad spectrum of health-related communities and sectors, including, but not limited to, researchers, scholars, and health professionals. Applications will be accepted from applicants who meet the eligibility criteria summarized below and who conduct research at an "**Approved Institution**", defined as: 1) a Canadian post-secondary institution and/or their affiliated institutions (including hospitals and research institutes), or 2) other organizations, as determined by the Research and Clinical Advisory Committee of the Board of Parkinson Canada in consultation with the Advisory Council, provided that the applicant's research or research-related activities fall within the mandate of Parkinson Canada.

The applicant must be a researcher who has completed formal training in health-related research. Applicants **must be employed through a permanent research appointment** at an Approved Institution. This research appointment must: 1) allow the applicant to pursue the proposed research project, 2) to supervise trainees, 3) to publish the results of the research, and 4) require the applicant to conform to institutional regulations concerning the conduct of research, the supervision of research trainees, and the employment conditions of trainees and/or support staff paid from the Parkinson Canada grant.

- Applicants must hold an MD or PhD degree (or equivalent degree) and be graduates of a university recognized by Parkinson Canada.
- Applicants must be university faculty members with a position ranking of Associate Professor or less, and within the first 5 years of obtaining an independent faculty position at a recognized university at the time of the application deadline (Oct. 5, 2026).
    - *Leaves of absence will be taken into consideration in calculating the 5-year eligibility criteria. Applicants must state the reasoning for the leave of absence.*
    - *Applicants in junior faculty positions outside of Canada and scientists transferring into the fields of Parkinson's research from another field are both eligible for this award but are subject to the same 5-year eligibility criteria.*
- An applicant cannot submit the same unfunded application more than three times in a three-year period.
- If you currently hold another Parkinson Canada Pilot Project Grant or New Investigator Award as a PI or Co-PI, or have pending final reports from a previous Parkinson Canada grant or award you are not eligible to apply.
    - *In order to provide Advisory Council members an opportunity during the peer review process to effectively evaluate the success of a previous award, applicants currently in receipt of a Parkinson Canada grant will not be permitted to submit a subsequent application for funding until the preceding award term has been completed.*
- An applicant cannot submit more than one grant application in the same competition cycle. Individuals wishing to be involved in another application proposal must be listed as collaborators or co-Investigators (not as a co-PI).

Researchers must meet the eligibility criteria established by Parkinson Canada at the time of application deadline.

The applicant must be responsible for the intellectual direction of the proposed project and must be willing and able to assume all administrative and financial responsibilities for any funds awarded under the Program. For more information on the roles and requirements for project team members, see the table below:

A new application section has been introduced requiring applicants to clearly describe the role and contribution of each team member, including their expertise, responsibilities, and relevance to the proposed research. Definition of roles for research team members:

Role	Role Description	Biosketch Required
Co-PI	An individual who shares responsibility with the Principal Investigator for the overall leadership, design, and direction of the research project. A Co-PI is jointly accountable for the scientific conduct of the project and for meeting reporting and accountability requirements. Co-Principal Investigators must meet the eligibility criteria of a Principal Investigator.	Yes
Co-Investigator	An individual who makes a significant intellectual contribution to the overall direction and successful completion of the research project. Co-Investigator are actively involved in the development, execution, and interpretation of the research, but do not share responsibility for overall project oversight or reporting.	Yes
Collaborator	An individual whose role is to provide a specific supporting, technical, advisory, or service-based contribution to the research project (e.g., access to data, equipment, patient populations, specialized analyses, or training in a specific technique). Collaborators do not contribute to the intellectual direction of the project and do not share responsibility for its overall conduct.	Not required

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND JUSTICE (EDIJ)

Parkinson Canada is committed to advancing the principles of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Justice throughout the organization. In the 2027 Research Competition, we are asking all applicants to complete a self-identification questionnaire, as a first step to better understand the demographics of our applicant pool and of our grant recipients.

We are complying with the highest standards of privacy and security to ensure that this deeply personal information is collected and stored in a secure manner. Our self-identification questionnaire closely mirrors the form used by federal funding agencies (E.g. CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC), and covers the same demographic dimensions. We are asking that all applicants to our research competition complete the questionnaire, but an applicant can choose the option “I prefer not to answer” for any question where they don’t feel comfortable sharing information.

The information from these self-identification questionnaires will only be accessed and reviewed after all applications have been fully reviewed and funding recommendations are completed, to ensure that this information will not be used to make any funding decisions. This personal information will only be reviewed by 1-2 staff members who have been trained in EDIJ principles.

All collected answers will be transferred into a de-identified aggregated format for internal review of our grant programs and to identify any major gaps where we are not reaching or attracting research applicants from historically underrepresented groups. We also promise that any data that we share with the public or key stakeholders from these findings will be in this de-identified aggregated format to protect the identity of individuals who have shared their personal information with us.

GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

For Applicants: Applicants are responsible for ensuring that information included in their applications is true and accurate and that all information sources are correctly referenced. Applicants should be aware that generative AI tools may lead to the incorrect recognition of source publications. Applicants must state if and how generative AI has been used in the development of their application. In cases where generative AI has been used, the applicant must also review and confirm the accuracy of the content. Applicants should also be aware that most online AI tools retain submitted information, and that intellectual property or confidential information (including identifiable patient data) uploaded onto AI tools may be retained and used in the future by these tools. Any potentially sensitive data should be de-identified or anonymized prior to upload.

For Grant Reviewers: The use of publicly available generative AI tools is **strictly prohibited** for grant reviewers for evaluating grant applications. This includes using translation tools such as DeepL or creating summaries using ChatGPT. Uploading application materials into generative AI tools could result in breaches of privacy and the potential loss of custody of intellectual property and confidential information.

REVIEW PROCESS

The evaluation of Applications submitted to Parkinson Canada will be completed by the Advisory Counsil through a peer review process. The Scientific Reviewers on the Advisory Council are composed of prominent neurologists, neurosurgeons, and neuroscientists from across Canada. The peer review process is a cornerstone of Parkinson Canada's research program and provides for the highest quality of objective adjudication.

The Advisory Council is responsible for the evaluation of all Applications submitted to Parkinson Canada in response to this Request for Applications, to rate each of the Applications so that they may be ranked in order of priority for funding by Parkinson Canada. External reviewers will be solicited for additional expertise as needed. The Advisory Council anticipates that it will provide each applicant whose Application to participate in the Program has been declined with written notice of such decision and where possible, a brief written critique of the substance of their Application.

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 of 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. This year, our lived experience reviewers will review the Project Impact and Patient Engagement Statements and provide a score that will account for 20% 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.

The PLEX Advisory Group will hold 2 virtual meetings in August – September . where interested applicants will be able to meet with and get feedback from past lived experience experts on their applications as it pertains to how they design their studies to improve the experience of patient participants in clinical studies, that project outcomes are designed to maximize impact to daily lives of people with Parkinson's, and that future knowledge translation activities are done with the general Parkinson's community in mind. For more information on this opportunity please email calaina.brooke@parkinson.ca.

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 by the Advisory Council 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.

Candidate (30%)
- Does the applicant have a strong training and publication history in the area of the proposed research?
- Does the applicant show the potential to become a leader in the field of Parkinson's Disease Research? Does the applicant show promise of significantly advancing biomedical or clinical research in the area of Parkinson's disease?

Project Novelty & Feasibility (30%)
- Does the project employ novel concepts, approaches, or methods? Are the project's objectives original and innovative? Does the project challenge existing paradigms or develop new methodologies or technologies?
- 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?

Proposed Budget & Lab Performance (20%)
- 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?
- Is the scientific environment (including personnel and trainees who will be involved in the project) likely to contribute to the project's probability of success?
- Is there evidence of institutional support of this project?

Impact of Project (20%)
- 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?

In addition to the above criteria all applications will also be reviewed with respect to the following:

- Applicants must clarify any overlap or potential overlap with currently funded projects.
- The adequacy of the proposed protection of humans, animals, or of the environment, to the extent that they may be adversely affected by the project proposed in the application. The Advisory Council will also examine the provisions for the protection of human subjects (if any) and the safety of the research environment.

Note that the Application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have major scientific or social impact and thus deserving of a high priority score.

GENERAL POLICIES

This Request for Applications made by Parkinson Canada is subject to the General Policies (the "Policies") contained in Parkinson Canada's Research Program Application Guidelines (the "Guidelines"), which the applicant shall be deemed to have accepted upon submission to Parkinson Canada of an Application to participate in the Program. Failure to comply with the Policies may result, in addition to any other remedies Parkinson Canada may have at law, in termination of the Program and exclusion of the applicant from future grant and fellowship award competitions.

A successful applicant who has received an award under the Program may not transfer the award to another institution unless exceptionally approved by the chairs of the Research Policy Committee and Trainee Committee (please see Guidelines).

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND TERMS OF FUNDING

All successful applicants shall comply with the reporting obligations outlined in the Guidelines.

Parkinson Canada requires grant recipients to submit Annual and Final Progress Reports, as well as a Financial Summary detailing the use of the funds awarded under the Program. The advance of the portion of the award to be made in the years 2 and 3 of the term of the Program is conditional upon submission of a progress report to Parkinson Canada in substance and form satisfactory to the Advisory Council at the end of the first and second years of the term of the Program.

The Progress reports shall be submitted to the Parkinson Canada Research Department no later than **one year (and two years) after the start of the award**. Progress report guidelines and instructions will be provided by Parkinson Canada in advance of the report deadline.

The Final Report must describe the results of the successful applicant's project and the Financial Summary must detail the use of the funds under the Program. These reports shall be submitted by the successful applicant to Parkinson Canada substance and form satisfactory to the Advisory Council. The Final Progress Report and the Financial Summary shall be submitted to the Parkinson Canada Research Department **no later than three months after the termination of the 3-year term of the Program.**

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Applications are submitted online through the Parkinson Canada online application system called SMApply. 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 October 5, 2026 (5:00 pm EST). Applications received after this time will not be considered and will be disqualified from the competition. There will be no exceptions.**

Applications for New Investigator Awards include the following:

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 withdrawn.

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) **Lay Summary**: Describe your project in clear, plain language for a general audience. Avoid technical jargon. (300 words max.; 500 words Francais).. 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?
3) **Project Impact Statement**: Please describe in 500 words or less (700 Francais) the anticipated patient and clinical impact of your project using the following prompts to organize the statement. Write this section for a general audience and avoid technical jargon.
    - Define a clear pathway to impact by outlining how the proposed research could translate into clinical application, intervention development, or changes in care for people affected by Parkinson's in both the short term (3-5 years) and long term (5-10 years).
        - ♣ Specify and describe the stage of translation your project represents and concrete next steps required to advance your work along this pathways to clinical application (e.g., early discovery with defined translational intent, preclinical validation, clinical research, implementation in care settings).
        - ♣ For projects with no immediate clinical outcomes, clearly justify project relevance by explaining how the findings would lead to or accelerate future clinical or care-based applications.
    - Articulate expected benefits of the outcomes of this project for people affected by Parkinson's, (eg. improvements in symptom management, care delivery, access to services, quality of life etc.)
    - Describe how people affected by Parkinson's have been or will be meaningfully engaged in shaping the research. This may include:
        - ♣ informing study design or priority setting
        - ♣ supporting feasible and inclusive recruitment and participation
        - ♣ contributing to interpretation of findings or knowledge translation
4) **Project Narrative: (5 pages max**; *6 pages French*), including:
    - **Background** of proposed studies
    - **Specific objectives** of the proposed studies
        - Applicants are encouraged to emphasize the novelty & innovation of the project objectives, and the high-risk/high-reward nature of the project.
    - **Details of proposed experiment**, including methods and procedures
        - **Next steps**: describe how the findings from this project may lead to major future studies.

    Note: The five-page limit applies only to the project narrative and does not include estimated budgets, references, biographical information, ethical approvals or other support documents.
5) **Budget**:
    - Using the **budget template** (Excel spreadsheet) provided on the application website show all significant aspects of the project such as salaries (trainees and support staff), equipment, materials & supplies, services, and knowledge translation. Equipment costs in budgets will be allowable up to 20% of the total budget and travel costs for presentation of research findings will be allowed up to a maximum of $1500. Parkinson Canada will not fund institutional overhead costs.
    - A separate **budget justification document** (max 1 page) will be required to and must include sufficient detail on the proposed budget, to allow reviewers to make judgements about the amount of funds necessary to allow the project to proceed.
    - Note: If >75% of the proposed budget is allocated for trainee salaries (PhD, Postdoc, or Clinical Fellow), we strongly encourage the applicant to have their trainees apply to the appropriate Parkinson Canada Research Programs for trainee salary support (Graduate

Student Award, Postdoctoral Research Fellowship, or Clinician Scientist Research Fellowship).

6) **Biographical information** of the applicant (using the Parkinson Canada biographical sketch form).
7) **Letters of Recommendation**: Three (3) letters of recommendation from professors or instructors under whom the applicant has taken training. The letters of recommendation must include evaluations of the applicant specific to this award.
8) **Letter of Mentorship**: Applicants are strongly encouraged to include a letter of mentorship with their application. The letter should state among other information that the writer has read the application and will provide assistance to the applicant.
9) **Relevant and reasonable support materials**, including but not limited to photographs, tables, assessment scales figures, literature references, letters of collaboration, appendices, and publications may be included.
10) **Signature of applicant** and an authorized signing official of the applicant's host institution.
11) **EDIJ Self-Identification Questionnaire**: All applicants are required to complete a self-identification questionnaire on SMApply (under the EDIJ Self-Identification Questionnaire Program). The purpose of this questionnaire is for Parkinson Canada to better understand the demographics of our applicant pool and of our grant recipients. The applicant may choose the option "I prefer not to answer" for any question where they do not feel comfortable sharing personal information. The answers provided will have no bearing on any funding decisions and will only be used for internal evaluation of our funding programs. All answers from the questionnaires will be migrated into a de-identified aggregated format so that no responses can be tracked back to any one individual, and all responses will be deleted from SMApply before Aug. 31, 2027.

Additional information if applicable

- If a version of the present application has been submitted previously to Parkinson Canada, but was not funded, provide a response to the comments of previous reviewers. The response should stand alone, i.e. no required reference to any other documents, including the previous application.
- If funding has been received from Parkinson Canada within the past five (5) years, please indicate whether you were able to publish / present the results of your research or leverage funding for other grants (maximum 500 words).
- An explanation of any interruption in the applicant's academic career.

Applications may be submitted in either English or French. Best efforts will be made to assign French-speaking reviewers with appropriate research expertise 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. For more information please contact research@parkinson.ca.

All applications must be submitted via our online application system. Please retain copies of all application documents in case there are any issues accessing application files. Incomplete applications or applications received later than **October 5, 2026 (5:00 pm EST)** will not be considered **under any circumstances. Any applications in violation of these guidelines are subject to disqualification at the discretion of the Trainee Committee.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE REFER TO:

The Parkinson Canada 'Apply for Funding' webpage, or contact Calaina Brooke (Research Programs Coordinator), calaina.brooke@parkinson.ca