



# Parkinson Canada

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## REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Issued By  
*Parkinson Canada*

### PILOT PROJECT GRANT 2026 Cycle

Release Date:	September 2, 2025
Application Deadline (Online Receipt):	November 3, 2025 (5:00 PM EST)
Notifications of Award:	March 2026
Funding Start Date:	July 1, 2026
Duration of Award:	1 year (non-renewable)

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#### Important Changes to the 2026 Competition

1. **Guidance on the use of artificial intelligence:** A new guidance on the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools has been developed for applicants and for grant reviewers (see the relevant section below for more information).
2. **Research Priority Area: Women with Parkinson's - health and well-being:** Parkinson Canada has earmarked \$100,000 of the research competition budget to research projects with a focus on women's health and well-being in Parkinson's. More details are provided below.

## BACKGROUND

Parkinson Canada is pleased to offer the Pilot Project Grant Program (the “Program”) as part of its strategic initiative to encourage investigators (researchers) with faculty or equivalent appointments, to enter and perform research in new, specifically targeted, high priority areas of Parkinson’s research in Canada. It is our intent that successful applicants in this Program will utilize the funds provided under the Program to acquire preliminary data leading to development of larger projects eligible for funding from a major granting agency. Parkinson Canada intends to provide awards in the amount of up to \$75,000 over a one-year term to outstanding applicants who meet the eligibility criteria of the Program and who have been approved by Parkinson Canada’s Scientific Advisory Council (the “Advisory Council”). Funds awarded under the Program are to be used to cover operating expenses, technical support staff salaries, trainee stipends, and equipment costs for research grants in Parkinson’s-related areas.

Through this initiative, Parkinson Canada invites grant applications (“Applications”) from applicants committed to conducting novel, emerging, or innovative research in areas relevant to the cure, cause, prevention, improved treatment and/or understanding of Parkinson’s disease, related disorders including: Multiple System Atrophy (MSA), Progressive Supranuclear Palsy (PSP), other Parkinson’s conditions and its implications on society.

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  $\alpha$ -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 Pilot Project Grant Program offers up to \$75,000 in funding per grant, over a one-year term, to exceptional eligible applicants who have been recommended for funding by the Advisory Council based on an independent review and approved by the Board of Directors.

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 SMAApply, and

completion of the template will be required for all applications. To encourage applicants to engage with and consult with people affected by Parkinson's in their study design, we have added a budget line in the budget template document to account for any consultation meetings, focus groups, or other patient engagement activities. **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 Pilot Project Grant 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.

## **RESEARCH PRIORITY AREA – WOMEN WITH PARKINSON'S: HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

Parkinson Canada is prioritizing research with a focus on **the health and well-being of women with Parkinson's**. This focus recognizes that women are uniquely impacted by Parkinson's due to biological, social, and health care factors that remain underexplored. Eligible projects must explicitly examine issues relevant to women's health and well-being, such as hormonal influences, symptom expression and treatment response in women, health care access and bias, and psychosocial well-being. For this research priority area, \$100,000 of our competition budget will be earmarked for projects that directly examine sex- and gender-related differences, challenges, and opportunities in Parkinson's. Applications that do not explicitly address a research question focused on women's health and well-being 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), 2) Canadian non-governmental, not-for-profit organizations (including community or charitable organizations) with an explicit research or knowledge translation mandate, or 3) 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.

- 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 Pilot Project 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. In Applications where the responsibility for the intellectual direction of the proposed project is shared more or less equally between two or more individuals, there may be two or more co-applicants. However, in this situation, the applicants must nominate, by mutual written agreement, one of the individuals to assume administrative responsibility over funds awarded under the Program. These funds will be paid in trust to the nominated individual's Approved Institution. For more information on the roles and requirements for project team members, see the table below:

Definition of roles for research team members:

Role	Role Description	Biosketch Required
<b>Co-PI</b>	Roughly equal share of responsibility with Primary Investigator for overall leadership, design and direction of the project.	Yes
<b>Co-Applicant</b>	Significant contributor to the intellectual direction and completion of the project.	Yes
<b>Co-Investigator</b>	Provides expertise and carries out specific parts of the project under the direction of the PI or co-PI.	Not required
<b>Collaborator</b>	Provides a supporting and/or advisory role to the project.	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 2026 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 Council 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 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 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.

This year we have established a new Advisory Group, which is composed of past lived experience reviewers. This Advisory Group will hold 2 virtual meetings in Sept.-Oct. 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 [ko.currie@parkinson.ca](mailto:ko.currie@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.

### **Novelty & Innovation (40%)**

- 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?
- Applicants must clarify how their project is truly new or pilot as it relates to other Parkinson Canada funding received.
- Can the results of the proposed project potentially lead to new lines of inquiry, novel findings, and potential follow-on studies the build on the outcomes?

### **Lab Performance (20%)**

- Does the applicant have a strong training and publication history in the area of the proposed or in another field that can be applied to Parkinson's?
- 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?

### **Proposed Budget, Project Feasibility & Methodology (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?
- 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 researchers (if any)?

### **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 projects that are receiving external funding from other organizations.
- 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:

1. **Progress Report** (due before the 6-month anniversary of the funding start date)
2. **Final Progress Report** and a **Financial Summary** (due within 3 months of grant termination)
3. **Post-grant Report** (2 years after grant termination)

The Progress report shall be submitted to the Parkinson Canada Research Department ([research@parkinson.ca](mailto:research@parkinson.ca)) no later than **6 months after the start of the award**. Progress report templates and instructions will be provided by Parkinson Canada in advance of the report deadline. Failure to submit the report by the deadline may result in a pause in funding or the termination of the award.

The Final Progress Report must describe the results of the successful applicant’s project and the Financial Summary must detail the use of the funds awarded under the Program. These reports shall be submitted by the successful applicant to Parkinson Canada in 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 ([research@parkinson.ca](mailto:research@parkinson.ca)) **no later than three months after the termination of the one-year term of the Program**.

To assist in assessing the benefits of this Program as part of Parkinson Canada’s enhanced research program and as part of the broad scope of Parkinson’s research in Canada, Parkinson Canada has planned to evaluate the performance of the Program. Such evaluation, amongst other things, is intended to provide a mechanism to demonstrate the effects of donor and public support to the Program over the long term. To this end, **in addition to monitoring the status of the project over the one-year term of**

the Program, the successful applicant will be required to submit an additional follow-up report two years after the termination of the one-year term of the Program. This follow-up report should be submitted to the attention of [research@parkinson.ca](mailto:research@parkinson.ca) upon the completion of the project or at such other suitable time within the two-year period as determined by the successful applicant. The follow-up report should include material information about the project, including information on the long-term performance of the project, details of published articles or presentations and subsequent funding awards. Further details of such report requirements will be provided to successful applicants at a later date.

## APPLICATION PROCEDURES

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 November 3, 2025 (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 Pilot Project Grants 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 disqualified.

- 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 (**750 words max; 900 words FR**). 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)? Include estimated timelines to clinical use, describe the possible benefits to daily life or access to healthcare, and any new scientific resources that may be generated for future use.
- 3) **Patient Involvement Statement:** Please state in **150 words or less** (180 words French) how you have engaged (or plan to engage) with people affected by Parkinson's in the design of your study. This engagement strategy may include considerations for patient recruitment, requirements for participation in clinical activities, or knowledge translation activities for the project outcomes. Please note that this section will also be reviewed and scored by lived experience reviewers.
- 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) **Other Funding Sources:** Applicants must include accurate and complete information regarding all other sources of funding support (current or pending), including title, funding source, total amount of funds requested or awarded, inclusive funding period, and percentage effort of the applicant.

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

8) **Relevant and reasonable support materials**, including but not limited to photographs, literature references, maximum **three (3)** publications, letters of collaboration and appendices may be included. Applicants are encouraged to include copies of any assessment scales referred to in their proposals.

9) **Signature of applicant** and an authorized signing official of the applicant's host institution.

10) **EDIJ Self-Identification Questionnaire:** All applicants are required to complete a self-identification questionnaire on SMaply (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 SMaply before Aug. 31, 2026.

**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](mailto:research@parkinson.ca).

**All applications must be submitted via our online application system (SMAppl - <https://parkinsoncan.smapply.io/>). Please retain copies of all application documents in case there are any issues accessing application files. Incomplete applications or applications received later than **November 3, 2025 (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 Ko Currie (*Research Funding and Partnerships Manager*), [ko.currie@parkinson.ca](mailto:ko.currie@parkinson.ca).