

Terms of Reference: ALS Canada-Brain Canada Trainee Program 2018

Overview

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

About ALS Canada

Founded in 1977, the ALS Society of Canada (ALS Canada) and our provincial partners are dedicated to supporting Canadians living with ALS and investing in research to make ALS a treatable, not terminal, disease. We are a registered charity that receives no government funding – all of our services and research are funded through the generosity of our donors. Through the ALS Canada Research Program, we fund peer-reviewed research grants, foster collaboration and build capacity within Canada’s ALS research community, and participate in new areas of research where we are well-positioned to have an impact. Within Ontario, ALS Canada has a role similar to that of the provincial ALS societies providing services and support to help meet the needs of people living with ALS. ALS Canada advocates federally, provincially, and locally for better government support and access within the healthcare system for people touched by ALS. www.als.ca

About Brain Canada

Brain Canada is a national non-profit organization that enables and supports transformative, original and outstanding brain research in Canada. For more than a decade, Brain Canada has made the case for the brain as a single, complex system with commonalities across the range of neurological disorders, mental illnesses and addictions, brain and spinal cord injuries. Looking at the brain as one system has underscored the need for increased collaboration across disciplines and institutions, and a smarter way to invest in brain research that is focused on outcomes that will benefit patients and families.

The Canada Brain Research Fund is an innovative collaboration between the Government of Canada (through Health Canada) and Brain Canada to encourage Canadians to increase their support of brain research, and maximize the impact and efficiency of those investments. Brain Canada is raising up to \$120 million from private and non-federal sources, which is being matched by the Government of Canada on a 1:1 basis. 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 Canadians who suffer from brain disorders.” www.braincanada.ca

Qualifying Applicants

General Eligibility

All applicants will have demonstrated contributions to research which may or may not have related directly to ALS, but proposed future research and training must be ALS-related. It is expected that all applicants will play a major role in a research project specifically related to ALS; the applicant’s role in the project must be clearly defined in the application. It is expected that such a study would lead to presentation(s) at a scientific meeting and/or publication(s).

Doctoral Scheme

At the time of application, eligible trainees have applied to, been accepted for, or are enrolled in a PhD program under the supervision of an investigator who holds an academic position at a qualifying Canadian institution, defined according to CIHR guidelines (<http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/36374.html>). At the time of application, applicants should be within the first three years of doctoral studies. Non-Canadians training in Canadian labs are eligible to apply, but if awarded, would need to demonstrate they are eligible to work/study in Canada for the duration of the requested funding.

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Postdoctoral Scheme

Qualifying trainees currently hold or have secured a postdoctoral position under the supervision of an investigator who holds an academic position at a qualifying Canadian institution, defined according to CIHR guidelines (<http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/36374.html>). Non-Canadians training in Canadian labs are eligible to apply, but if awarded, would need to demonstrate they are eligible to work/study in Canada for the duration of the requested funding. At the time of application, applicants should be transitioning from graduate work to a postdoctoral position or be within the first two years of postdoctoral studies.

Grant Details

- A pool of funds in excess of \$300,000 will be available for this program (exact amount TBD)
- The distribution of doctoral, postdoctoral fellowships will be determined by relative merit of the applications
- Each Doctoral Award would be funded at \$25,000 per year for up to three years
- Each Postdoctoral Fellowship would be funded at \$55,000 per year for up to three years

Use of Funds

- Funds may only be used as stipend/salary support
- Funds may not be used for employee benefits paid by the host institution
- Should the award/fellowship be terminated early, any unused funds must be returned to Brain Canada

Potential applicants should contact Brain Canada (programs@braincanada.ca) if they have technical enquiries about the application process. Questions about the program itself can be directed at either ALS Canada (dtaylor@als.ca) or Brain Canada (programs@braincanada.ca). All full applications must be submitted using Brain Canada's electronic grant management system (https://braincanada.smartsimple.ca/s_Login.jsp). The applicant must complete all required application fields before 16:00 ET on Friday, May 25, 2018.

Submissions will include (details below):

- 1) Project Summary
- 2) Proposal (0.5-page Scientific Abstract + 3-page research plan + 1-page figures and tables + References)
- 3) About you (up to 1500 words) and Percentage of time spent on other activities (limit 500 words)
- 4) Attachments (4-page Applicant Curriculum Vitae + 1-page Research training environment description)
- 5) Supervisor's Statement (fillable fields, uploaded 4-page curriculum vitae, and endorsement)
- 6) Reference Letters (Contact information for 2 additional references)
- 7) Certification

The Full Application will need to be formatted using 12-point Arial or Georgia 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. **It is the sole responsibility of the applicant to ensure their submission is acceptable and received before the deadline.** Those received in any other format, exceeding the page limits, incomplete, or late, will be rejected.

1) Project Summary

The Project Summary will state the Project Title, Dates of the project, Institution and Department where research training will take place, and the name and title of the supervisor, as well as keywords for the project.

2) Proposal (0.5-page Scientific Abstract + up to 3-page research plan + 1-page figures and tables + references)

The abstract should be scientific and approximately a half page in length describing the hypothesis, rationale, specific aims and significance. The 3-page proposal will summarize the research project to be undertaken during the award, as well as present any pilot data already acquired. The research plan can be completed in collaboration with the proposed supervisor. This information will be compiled into a single PDF and uploaded into the system.

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The research plan should be organized under the following headings:

- Rationale for the project
 - including hypothesis
- Specific aims
- Background
 - a comprehensive literature review is not expected. Please supply only the information that is required for reviewers, who are specialists in ALS and neurodegenerative disease, to understand the proposal
- Preliminary data
 - if existing
- Experimental Plan
 - a clear and logical experimental plan that addresses the hypothesis and specific aims
- Bibliography
 - include titles and all authors of the referenced articles; excluded from page limit

3) About you

This section is the applicant's opportunity to explain to the reviewers, in under 1500 words, why they should be chosen. Suggested materials include, but are not limited to:

- Previous training and how it relates to the present proposal
- Research goals and how the proposed training and environment will contribute
- Career goals and how this training and environment will contribute
- Importance of their research proposal to the field of ALS research and ALS Canada's or Brain Canada's vision

4) Attachments

Two main attachments will be uploaded in this section, the applicant's CV (maximum 4 pages) and the description of the training environment (maximum 1 page). Applicants' CVs should include the following sections: Education and Training, Positions and Honours, Professional Activities and Awards, Peer-reviewed Publications and Poster/Oral Presentations. For all multi-authored publications, an indication of the applicant's contribution should be provided. The description of the training environment (1-page, PDF) may include, but is not limited to sections that describe: space, equipment and personnel support available to the applicant, opportunities for professional development, etc. where applicable.

5) Supervisor's Statement

The supervisor's statement should describe why the applicant is being supported, including the fit between the applicant and the supervisor's research program, how the overall professional development of the trainee would be supported, and how the supervisor's research program and the training environment would prepare the trainee for a career in ALS research. These details will come across in the following categories: History of Trainee Supervision, Past trainees of note, Operating funds to support the proposed research, Research Environment, Past Laboratory Publications, and explicit agreement to supervise the candidate for the duration of the award (and to notify ALS Canada and Brain Canada Foundation in the event that he/she terminates their training). On this page, the supervisor will also be asked to upload a 4-page CV.

Supervisors' CVs should take the form of an NIH-style abbreviated biosketch, including the following sections: Education and Training, Positions and Honours, Research Focus (one paragraph), Professional Activities and Awards, Peer-reviewed Publications relevant to the proposal, and Research Funding (last five years). Maximum **FOUR** pages.

6) Reference Letters

The applicant will list the contact information (name, phone number, institution, email address) for two references (in addition to their supervisor). Applicants are also responsible for asking references to send signed

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letters (PDF) directly to programs@braincanada.ca, these will be attached to the application by internal Brain Canada Foundation staff.

7) Certification

All applicants must validate that they are eligible to apply.

Evaluation

Applications in both schemes will be reviewed by a panel of experts, selected jointly by Brain Canada and ALS Canada. Reviewers will consider the merit of the applicant, the quality of the project, work to date, and the relevance of the work to ALS. Written feedback will be provided to the applicant from at least one reviewer.

The composition of this review panel will include (but is not limited to) not-in-conflict member(s) of the Scientific & Medical Advisory Council (SMAC) of ALS Canada, non-ALS researchers with relevant expertise, and additional members of the Canadian research community (as necessary). The VP Research and Brain Canada representative will relay the recommendations of the review panel to their respective Board of Directors (or subcommittee), for final approvals of recommended applicants.

The Vice President, Research of ALS Canada and a representative from Brain Canada will facilitate the entire process. Other pertinent staff/volunteers from ALS Canada and Brain Canada will observe the peer review teleconference, as needed. A funding scenario will be recommended based on top ranked applications fitting into the available funding pool.

Conditions of the Award

- 1) Funds will be sent as annual instalments to the supervising PI's institution (Institution paid). Release of funds will be subject to receipt of relevant ethics approvals from the supervising PI's institutional review committees, where necessary (for use of human subjects, research animals, or hazardous materials). Note, the PI will be responsible for ensuring that relevant ethics approvals have been obtained at each participating institution. Significant changes in research aims or budget allocation requires *a priori* permission of ALS Canada and Brain Canada Foundation.
- 2) Annual progress reports are required, which will include a scientific report and an institutional financial statement. A final progress report is due within four weeks of termination of the grant. A template for reports will be provided by ALS Canada upon acceptance of the award. Reports will be evaluated by both ALS Canada and Brain Canada.
- 3) Funding is contingent upon compliance with the policies of ALS Canada and Brain Canada.
- 4) Awardees must disclose any other potential external funding conflict and notify ALS Canada and Brain Canada prior to accepting any additional funds to determine where conflict might exist. In situations where other sources can be considered to fund alongside a Trainee Award, ALS Canada and Brain Canada will make every effort to find a solution.
- 5) The intent of ALS Canada-Brain Canada fellowships and awards is to fund research that will be in the open domain. All manuscripts, presentations, abstracts, etc. must acknowledge funding by ALS Canada, the Government of Canada (Health Canada), and Brain Canada. Funded researchers should make every effort to publish all findings related to the project and to acknowledge ALS Canada, the Government of Canada (Health Canada), and Brain Canada in media events discussing the research projects that are funded. Manuscripts or other presentations in press must be sent to the Vice President, Research of ALS Canada upon acceptance for publication. ALS Canada should also be notified as soon as possible of media events related to the project. ALS Canada will relay all such information to Brain Canada Foundation. All such activities should also be detailed in the annual reports that are submitted to ALS Canada and Brain Canada Foundation.

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- 6) Trainees are required to inform the Vice President, Research at ALS Canada (who will notify and consult Brain Canada Foundation) of significant difficulties, availability of resources, additional funding sources, or significant changes to the experimental plan throughout the term of the grant. As per ALS Canada and Brain Canada Foundation policies, in the case of a leave of absence (e.g., parental leave or medical leave/long term disability), the award will be suspended and resumed upon return. Paid leave cannot be provided under these awards. Vacation policy will follow the trainee's institutional guidelines.
- 7) For the purposes of advocating the mission of ALS Canada and Brain Canada, it is expected that ALS Canada-Brain Canada funded researchers will actively engage with, or on behalf of, ALS Canada and/or Brain Canada when requested.
- 8) ALS Canada funded trainees will be expected to make every effort to attend the annual ALS Canada Research Forum irrespective of being chosen as an accompanying junior for their supervisor. ALS Canada will cover their expenses as a separate, sponsored invitee.

Questions and Additional Information

For eligibility, application components, evaluation, and conditions:

David Taylor, PhD

Vice President, Research

ALS Society of Canada

393 University Avenue, Suite 1701

Markham, ON M5G 1E6

Email: dtaylor@als.ca

Tel: (416) 497-2267 ext. 202

For questions relating to the SmartSimple application system:

(https://braincanada.smartsimple.ca/s_Login.jsp):

Sabina Antonescu, MSc

Coordinator of Programs

Fondation Brain Canada Foundation

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Important Dates

- Call announced April 13, 2018
- Application deadline May 25, 2018 (16:00 ET)
- Announcement of award August 2018
- Earliest funding start date September 1, 2018