

Terms of Reference: ALS Canada Trainee Award Program 2019

Overview

The vision of ALS Canada is to achieve “a future without ALS”. ALS Canada has 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

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. Canadians working abroad also may be eligible, but should contact research@als.ca to confirm individual situations prior to applying.

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. Canadians working abroad also may be eligible, but should contact research@als.ca to confirm individual situations prior to applying.

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Grant Details

- A \$240,000 pool of funds will be available for this program
- The distribution of Doctoral Awards, Postdoctoral Fellowships will be determined by relative merit of the application
- 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 ALS Canada

Potential applicants should contact ALS Canada (research@als.ca) if they have enquiries about the application process. All full applications must be submitted to research@als.ca. The applicant must complete all required application fields before 1:00 pm EST on Friday, May 17, 2019.

Submissions will include (details below):

- 1) Cover page
- 2) Letter from the applicant (limit 2 pages)
- 3) Letter from the proposed supervisor (limit 2 pages)
- 4) Scientific summary/abstract (limit ½ page)
- 5) Research plan/Fellowship proposal (limit 3 pages)
- 6) Figures and Tables (optional, 1 page)
- 7) Research training environment (limit 1 page)
- 8) Percentage of time spent on other activities (limit ½ page)
- 9) Curriculum vitae of applicant
- 10) Curriculum vitae of proposed supervisor (limit 4 pages)
- 11) Additional letter of support

1) Cover page

Please note, this is provided as a fillable form page (Word Doc), downloadable from the ALS Canada website. Sign and complete.

2) Letter from the applicant

The letter is the applicant's opportunity to explain to the reviewers why they should be chosen. Suggested material includes, but is 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 vision

3) Letter from the proposed supervisor

The letter from the proposed supervisor 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.

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4) Scientific summary/abstract

The abstract should be scientific and approximately one-half page in length describing the hypothesis, rationale, specific aims and significance.

5) Research plan/Fellowship proposal

Research plan can be completed in collaboration with the proposed supervisor – limit **THREE** pages excluding bibliography

Doctoral/Postdoctoral Schemes

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

6) Figures and Tables

One optional page will be allowed for figures and/or tables which accompany the research plan (including preliminary data or information to support feasibility). This page may not be used for supplementary text.

7) Research training environment

This section may include a description of, but not limited to: space, equipment and personnel support available to the applicant, opportunities for professional development, etc. where applicable.

8) Percentage of time spent on other activities

Please provide a breakdown of time spent on additional activities.

9) Curriculum vitae of the applicant

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. Please do not submit CIHR Common CV. There is no page limit.

10) Curriculum vitae of the proposed supervisor

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

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Awards, Peer-reviewed Publications relevant to the proposal, and Research Funding (last five years). Maximum **FOUR** pages. Please do not submit CIHR Common CV.

11) Additional letter of support

Please send directly to dtaylor@als.ca.

Evaluation

Applications will be reviewed by a panel of experts, selected by 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. Each application will be assigned two reviewers and based on their preliminary scoring, a subset of applications will be discussed and live scored by the entire panel for ranking and recommendation. Written feedback will be provided to the applicant from each 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 will relay the recommendations of the review panel to the Board of Directors for final approvals of recommended applicants. 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.
- 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.
- 3) Funding is contingent upon compliance with the policies of ALS Canada.
- 4) Awardees must disclose any other potential external funding conflict and notify ALS 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 will make every effort to find a solution.
- 5) The intent of ALS 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. Funded researchers should make every effort to publish all findings related to the project and to acknowledge ALS 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

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publication. ALS Canada should also be notified as soon as possible of media events related to the project. All such activities should also be detailed in the annual reports that are submitted to ALS Canada.

- 6) Trainees are required to inform the Vice President, Research at ALS Canada 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 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, it is expected that ALS Canada funded researchers will actively engage with, or on behalf of, ALS Canada when requested.
- 8) ALS Canada funded trainees will be expected 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. In the event they are not able to attend, the recipient is expected to provide valid reason proactively.

Questions and Additional Information

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ALS Society of Canada

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Important Dates

- Call announced March 4, 2019
- Application deadline May 17, 2019 (1pm ET)
- Announcement of award August 2019
- Earliest funding start date September 1, 2019