

Terms of Reference: ALS Canada Project Grant Program 2019

Overview

The 2019 Project Grant Program encompasses applications previously designated for Discovery, Bridge or Clinical Management Grant competitions. The purpose of the program is to invest in the best possible projects that are i) novel research approaches, supported by sound rationale and a feasible experimental plan, but not necessarily preliminary data, ii) part of an ongoing ALS research program, and aimed toward the vision of ALS Canada, which is “A future without ALS” or iii) research focused on avenues to maximize function, minimize disability and optimize quality of life through symptom management, and support to families and persons or families living with ALS. Examples include, but are not limited to, management of secretions and cramps, psychological interventions to address mental health issues, nutritional interventions, respiratory care, engineering applications to reduce physical limitations, and programs to address the needs of caregivers.

Funding

Up to eight awards of up to \$100,000 will be awarded in this cycle. The one-time award may be used for research over a 12-24 month period, at the discretion of the Principal Investigator (PI).

Eligibility

In applications involving multiple institutions and/or investigations, a lead investigator must be named who will assume the administrative and financial responsibility for the grant, which will be paid to that individual’s institution (the Institution Paid).

For options i and ii above, each co-investigator must be an independent researcher who has a PhD or equivalent, or a health professional degree (MD). Clinical researchers should have completed residency training which includes research experience or the individual should have previous research experience. The PI must hold an academic position at a qualifying Canadian institution, defined according to CIHR guidelines (<http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/36374.html>).

For option iii above, the principal applicant must be a clinician with an MD or a non-physician professional with experience treating or working with people living with ALS. The PI must hold an academic position at a qualifying Canadian institution, defined according to CIHR guidelines (<http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/36374.html>). In the event that the PI does not hold an academic position, justification must be provided for assessment by an ad hoc sub-committee of the Scientific and Medical Advisory Council.

Application Process

Complete applications should be submitted via email to the ALS Canada Research Team (research@als.ca), as a single PDF file by 1:00 pm EST on June 7th, 2019. Applicants should request delivery and read receipts. An email acknowledging receipt of the application will be sent. Up to two individuals may be excluded as reviewers.

Documents should be prepared using standard type fonts (Calibri-11, Arial-11 or Times Roman -12).

Pages should be numbered and have minimum margins of 0.5”/1.27 cm on all sides. All pages to be submitted should be included in one pdf file.

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Please submit your applications for review in the following order:

- 1) Cover page
- 2) Abstract (scientific) (limit ½ page)
- 3) Research Plan (limit 6 pages)
- 4) Figures and Tables (limit 3 pages)
- 5) Bibliography
- 6) Budget Page(s)
- 7) Curriculum Vitae (see below for format) (limit 5 pages)
- 8) Supporting Documents
- 9) Other funding currently held or applied for

1) Cover page

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

2) Abstract page

The abstract should be scientific and approximately one-half page in length describing the hypothesis, rationale, specific aims and significance with respect to identifying causes and/or treatments for ALS OR of the proposed project to the quality of life management for individuals living with ALS.

3) Research Plan

The research plan should be a maximum of **SIX** pages, adhering to the format described below.

The research plan should be organized under the following headings:

- Rationale
 - statement of the hypothesis/objective of the proposed research
- Significance of the proposed project to the identification of causes or development of treatments for ALS.
 - describe what is novel and exciting about the research plan
- Background
 - a comprehensive literature review is not expected. Please supply only the information that is required for reviewers who are specialists in ALS and related neurological diseases to understand the proposal
- Preliminary results supporting the hypothesis/research objective
 - this information can be provided in the Rationale or Experimental Plan, or here as a separate section
- Experimental Plan
 - due to constraints of space, put emphasis on description and justification of the general methodology to be used to test the hypothesis or achieve the research objectives

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4) Figures & Tables

A maximum of **THREE** additional pages are allowed for figures and/or tables which accompany the research plan (including preliminary data or information to support feasibility). These pages may not be used for supplementary text. Figures and tables should not be interwoven with the text of the Research Plan.

5) Bibliography

The research plan should be appropriately referenced. Please use a format that includes the title of the reference. The Bibliography is not included in the total page count.

6) Budget Page(s)

Budget should clearly itemize proposed use of project funds under appropriate categories and consistent with CIHR approved expenditures: personnel, laboratory equipment, consumable supplies, laboratory animals, other (including service contracts, service charges, publication costs, etc). Total budget requested should be clearly stated. No indirect costs are provided in these grants. Total budget can range from \$50,000 to \$100,000 to be spent over 12-24 months. A detailed budget justification should follow the itemized budget.

7) Curriculum vita(e)

The curriculum vitae of the PI, as well as of any co-investigators must be provided. Please do not submit the CIHR Common CV. 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 **FIVE** pages.

8) Supporting Documents

Letters of collaboration or support from colleagues who will provide resources critical to the proposed research plan should also be included.

9) Other funding currently held or applied for

Please submit a list of funding currently held or pending. Please indicate any overlap with your proposal.

Evaluation

Applications will be reviewed, scored and ranked together by the International Peer Review Panel comprising basic and clinician scientists with expertise in ALS and/or related neurological diseases. Panel members are selected by the current Panel Chair and the Vice President, Research. Future Chairs are selected by the current Panel Chair and the Vice President, Research, and approved by the board of ALS Canada. Grants will be assessed on scientific merit, potential impact and feasibility of the experimental plan.

Additional external reviewers may be solicited by the Chair and Vice President, Research according to additional expertise required or work load of the Panel members. These external reviewers will provide ratings and detailed comments to inform the discussions at the in-person meeting of the Panel.

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Briefly, each application will be assigned a primary and secondary reviewer by the ALS Canada VP, Research and the International Peer Review Panel Chair. Each reviewer will return an overall score to a maximum of 7.0 prior to the in-person meeting. The Chair will then recommend a threshold score for triage of any grants with both reviews below the mark. Every grant will be provided the opportunity to be rescued for further discussion by the panel. Applications will be discussed from lowest mean score to highest, beginning with primary reviewer comments, followed by secondary reviewer comments, then panel-wide discussion. Following discussion, the primary and secondary reviewers will collaborate on a consensus score out of 7.0 and the panel will live score independently with encouragement to consider +/- 1.0 from the consensus score. Following discussion of all grants, a ranked list based on mean live score will be presented and the Chair will give the panel a final opportunity to discuss and alter rankings if desired. The panel will also make a recommendation for a funding scenario based on the final ranking and the available funds. Post-panel discussion between the ALS Canada Research Team, CEO and observing Board member(s) will determine how the recommendation will be presented to the Board of Directors for funding decisions.

All applicants will receive anonymized reviewers' comments and a summary of major discussion points from the Vice President, Research, unless not discussed in detail at the in-person meeting.

Conditions of the Award

- 1) 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. No-cost extensions are possible, pending approval by ALS Canada. Significant changes in research aims or budget allocation requires *a priori* permission of ALS Canada.
- 2) Funds will be sent as quarterly instalments to the PI's institution (Institution paid).
- 3) Annual progress reports are required. A final progress report is due within four weeks of termination of the grant. A template will be provided by ALS Canada upon acceptance of the award.
- 4) Funding is contingent upon compliance with the policies of ALS Canada.
- 5) Budgetary overlap for the project with other funding provided by ALS Canada or another agency must be disclosed.
- 6) The intent of these grants is to fund research that will be in the open domain. All manuscripts, presentations, abstracts, etc. must acknowledge funding by ALS Canada. Grantees should make every effort to publish all findings related to the project and to acknowledge ALS Canada in media events discussing research funded by ALS Canada. 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.
- 7) Awardees are required to inform the Vice President, Research of significant difficulties, availability of resources, additional funding sources, or changes to the experimental plan throughout the term of the grant.
- 8) 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.

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- 9) To encourage collaboration and increase the visibility of ALS researchers, ALS Canada is establishing an official national research network. Once established, participation and registration in this network will be required in order to receive new or continuing funding from ALS Canada. Funded researchers will be expected to make every effort to attend the annual ALS Canada Research Forum as a sponsored invitee and will be encouraged to present their project upon request.

Questions and Additional Information

David Taylor, PhD
Vice President, Research
ALS Canada
393 University Avenue, Suite 1701
Toronto, ON M5G 1E6
Email: research@als.ca
Tel: 416-497-2267 ext 202

Important Dates

- Call announced March 4, 2019
- Application deadline June 7th, 2019 (1pm ET)
- Announcement of award October 2019
- Earliest funding start date November/December 2017