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Postdoctoral Fellowship Guidelines

2023-2024 Competition

MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY CANADA

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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

THE NEUROMUSCULAR DISEASE NETWORK FOR CANADA

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Award Overview

Muscular Dystrophy Canada (MDC), together with the Neuromuscular Disease Network for Canada (NMD4C), are committed to supporting researchers build successful careers and maintaining Canadian neuromuscular research excellence into the future by attracting new people and ideas to the field. The award provides salary support for trainees to conduct post-doctoral studies in a laboratory focused on research of NMDs. The specific research proposed in the application should focus on an aspect that will have an impact on understanding or treating NMDs and should serve as the basis for the applicant's own subsequent independent research career.

Funding Amount: Applicants can request up to \$40,000 for 1 year.

Grant Cycle Timeline

Application Launch:	September 5, 2023
Application Deadline:	October 17, 2023 at 11:59 PM ET
Notification of Funding:	January 2024
Funding Start:	February 1, 2024

About MDC

Muscular Dystrophy Canada (MDC) is a national, non-profit organization whose mission is to enhance the lives of those impacted with neuromuscular disorders by continually working to provide ongoing support and resources while relentlessly searching for cures through well-funded research. MDC works to support individuals affected by neuromuscular disorders in the “here and now” through our programs and services outside of the traditional circle of care. These include funding for equipment and assistive technology, system navigation and education. At the same time, we also invest in “tomorrow” by supporting research, which fosters advances in improving health outcomes and influencing positive change systemically.

Funding for this fellowship is being provided by Muscular Dystrophy Canada. Awardees will be referred to as “*Muscular Dystrophy Canada Research Fellows*.”

About NMD4C

The Neuromuscular Disease Network for Canada (NMD4C) is a pan-Canadian network that brings together the country's leading clinical, scientific, technical, and patient expertise to improve care, research, and collaboration in neuromuscular disease. Launched in January 2020 with funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and Muscular Dystrophy Canada (MDC). The mission of NMD4C is to improve the care, research and treatment of NMDs for all Canadians. Its vision is to be a comprehensive, inclusive, open and enduring network through which Canadian stakeholders can share expertise and data, and collaborate on joint activities and research for the benefit of Canadian patients.

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Guidelines and General Instructions

1. APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

Applicants to be considered for funding must meet the following eligibility criteria:

1.1. Applicants

- Applicants must hold a PhD, received no more than 36 months from the date the degree was conferred, before the time of application. For clinician-scientists, this application should be submitted within two years after completion of their final clinical training. Exceptions to the above 36 months eligibility period will be considered due to delays in training or extenuating circumstances. Applicants may apply for this fellowship before completing their terminal degree, if they have a firm commitment from the laboratory head in which training will take place.
- Applicants should not hold another full salary fellowship concurrently; however, salary support received from this fellowship can be supplemented by their supervisor. For further details see [Section 2: Use of Funds](#)
- Applicants need not be Canadian citizens; however, they are required to be conducting their research at a Canadian research institution. See [1.2 Supervisor and Institution](#). If awarded, the applicant would need to demonstrate they are eligible to work/study in Canada for the duration of the requested funding.
- The proposed research project and training must be related to a specific or multiple neuromuscular disorders under the mandate of MDC. This entails health conditions with a genetic or immune-mediated cause where the primary affect is on the muscles and/or the nerves that innervate them. This includes muscular dystrophies, myopathies, neuromuscular junction disorders, peripheral neuropathies, and lower motor neuron* disorders.

*Please note: Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis /Primary lateral sclerosis do not fall under the mandate of MDC. Please see ALS Canada for funding opportunities. For any questions on disorder eligibility, please contact research@muscle.ca

1.2. Supervisor and Institution

- It is the responsibility of the Applicant to make all arrangements for the proposed training with an appropriate supervisor and institution prior to formal application.
- The fellowship must be completed in a Canadian academic research institution. Qualifying Canadian institutions are defined according to CIHR guidelines (<http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/36374.html>).

2. USE OF FUNDS

- Funds may only be used as salary support for the postdoctoral fellow applicant
- Funds may not be used for employee benefits paid by the host institution
- Should the award/fellowship be terminated early, the fellow and supervising Principal Investigator (PI) must contact MDC.
- Applicants currently holding an award that does not cover their full salary may apply for a top up. MDC should be the second funder, this fellowship should not be in lieu of other salary funding available through grants, awards, and fellowship from other institutions or funders.

3. CONDITIONS OF THE AWARD

- Funds will be sent as annual installments from MDC to the supervising PI's institution (Institution paid). The PI will be responsible for ensuring that relevant ethics approvals have been obtained at each participating institution.
- Successful applicants need to submit a written progress report at the end of their funding period. A template will be provided by MDC.
- All manuscripts, presentations, abstracts, etc. must acknowledge funding by stating: “<Name> has been supported by a Muscular Dystrophy Canada Research Fellowship in collaboration with the Neuromuscular Disease Network for Canada
- Funded researchers should make every effort to publish all findings related to the project and to acknowledge MDC and NMD4C in media events discussing the research projects that are funded. Researchers should notify MDC of published manuscripts and prior to any media events or public communications related to the project
- It is expected that the awardees will prepare presentations (1-2) about their work for MDC/NMD4C events to promote the mission of the supporting organizations and dissemination of knowledge.

4. APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Applicants must complete the online through the grants management system, ProposalCentral, by the deadline specified. Applications are not accepted via email or mail.

The application consists of a series of online questions – where responses can be typed directly into the application as well as upload the required PDFs listed below to the online portal. Progress can be saved online at multiple stages. It is recommended that all typed answers should also be saved outside of ProposalCentral as a backup.

4.1 Submitting a Grant Application through ProposalCentral

- Visit <https://proposalcentral.altum.com/>
- Login using your ORCID ID, or create a new ORCID account for first-time users. This account can be used to submit application to any funder using ProposalCentral
- Select the “Grant Opportunities” tab.
- Filter the list by grant maker: “Muscular Dystrophy Canada”, find the “Postdoctoral Fellowship” program on the list and click “*Apply Now*”.
- The system will take you through the application steps. Clicking “next” will save the previous section’s entry.
- Upload all necessary documents in pdf format.
- Validate your application and submit any incomplete sections.
- Submit e-signatures. Note the applicant and postdoctoral supervisor need to be logged into ProposalCentral with their own credentials to access the corresponding signature field. The Applicant can give access to supervisor for this application in the Supervisor and Co-supervisor section.

Frequently Asked Questions and Tutorials available here:

<https://proposalcentral.com/contactus.asp>

4.2 Application Requirements

You will need to include the following in your application.

Direct Application questions to be filled out directly in online application:

1. Non-scientific summary of intended project (*½ page*)
 - Written in plain language (to be understood by those who are not in biomedical research)
2. Scientific abstract of intended project (*½ page*)
 - State the objectives of the research project and summarize the scientific approach, highlighting the expected significance of the work.
3. Eligibility and keyword questionnaire

Documents to be uploaded to ProposalCentral:

1. Full research project proposal: (*max 5 pages, inclusive of tables/figures and bibliography*)
 - Including rationale, review of literature, specific objectives, hypotheses/expected outcomes, methodology, preliminary data (if available), significance/impact
2. Training expectations (*max 2 pages*)
 - Why is this post-doctoral fellowship right for you, and how does it fit into your career plan?
 - Describe your commitment to research in the field of neuromuscular disease and Canada.
 - Why have you chosen this particular lab?
 - What training and professional development opportunities outside of the proposed research is available/in your plan?
4. Three Reference Letters - These will be directly uploaded by your referees who are inputted in the Letter of Reference Section. You can check submission status on this page.
5. **CIHR Biosketch version for Applicant completed on the Canadian Common CV website (<https://ccv-cvc.ca/>) and downloaded as a PDF.**
6. **CIHR Biosketch version for Postdoctoral Supervisor completed on the Canadian Common CV website (<https://ccv-cvc.ca/>) and downloaded as a PDF.**

Referee's documents to be uploaded by referee:

You will require **3** letters of support. Please follow instructions in the online application to provide the email addresses of the referees. They will be directly sent the link from ProposalCentral to upload their letter.

- One letter of support from your proposed new postdoctoral fellow supervisor(s)
- Two letters of support from two additional external references

4.3 Formatting guidelines

Please note the following criteria for attachments uploaded to the online applications:

- Documents **must be in PDF format** and ≤ 10 MB.
- Applications must be written in English, with font size no less than 11 points, and 2.54 cm margins.
- Do not use jargon or unusual abbreviations.

4.4 Language

MDC is a nation-wide organization and serves the community in either of Canada's official languages where feasible. We ask, however, that research application be submitted in English as

MDC and NMD4C prioritizes scientific expertise when selecting reviewers. As such, we are unable to guarantee French-speaking reviewers who also have the appropriate scientific expertise. Additionally, there are significant costs incurred to translate applications for the review process and we are unable to guarantee the scientific accuracy of those translations.

5. EVALUATION PROCESS

Applications will be reviewed by members of an independent review committee selected by MDC and NMD4C. The committee also includes a Chair, an established researcher in the NMD scientific community who oversees the entire process and presides over the review meetings to guide the committee to a consensus rating.

Each application will be scored based on the review panel's assessments of the application and letters of support, consideration of all applications in pool, and the reports of the reviewers. Summarized anonymous feedback will be provided for all applications submitted, whether they were successful or not.

6. REQUESTS FOR EXTENSION

If a no-cost extension is required due to a leave of absence and/or unforeseen circumstances, please contact Muscular Dystrophy Canada. Requests should indicate reason for required extension, duration as well as identify changes in scope/research aims. All requests will be evaluated based on original proposal and decisions will be made at an ad hoc basis.

7. QUESTIONS AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

For technical support with your online application, contact ProposalCentral:

pcsupport@altum.com | 1 800-875-2562 (Toll-free U.S. and Canada)

Hours of operation are Monday through Friday 8:30 am to 5:00 pm Eastern Time

Frequently Asked Questions and Tutorials available here:

<https://proposalcentral.com/contactus.asp>

For program information, disorder list, eligibility and any other related questions please contact MDC:

Muscular Dystrophy Canada Research Department:

research@muscle.ca | 1 800 567-2873 ext. 9037