

Program Guidelines
**McGill / Western Collaboration Grant
(MWCG)**

Fund Cycle: 2018
Version: 1.0

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1.0 Overview of McGill / Western Collaboration Grant

The Canada First Research Excellence Fund (CFREF) awarded a combined \$150M over 7 years towards Neuroscience/Neuroinformatics to two complementary initiatives – Healthy Brains for Healthy Lives (HBHL) at McGill University and BrainsCAN at Western University. The vision of this partnership is to create a unique integrated and innovative cross-institutional collaborative platform that will fundamentally advance our comprehensive understanding of brain function, escalate breakthrough discoveries to unlock the mysteries of the human mind and behaviour, and uncover new ways to treat, prevent, and cure brain disorders.

1.1 McGill / Western Collaboration Grant Priorities

MWCGs are designed to potentiate cross-institution, multidisciplinary teams of HBHL and BrainsCAN researchers, and to address some of the grand challenges in brain health across the lifespan via potentially high-risk but also high-gain research projects. Along with discovery-based science applications, the MWCG may also directly fund the development of research and knowledge translation with industrial and end-user partners, to stimulate unique applied research endeavors.

2.0 Program Philosophy & Structure

The MWCG aims to foster a collaborative research environment that promotes transformative research (defined as research with an inherent high degree of uncertainty and the capability to produce a major impact on important questions in circuits underlying behaviour). To that end, there are limited restrictions on size and duration of proposals, thereby allowing the nature of the research and experimentation to dictate the specifics of the grant. However, the MWCG does recognize two separate streams of projects consisting of smaller value and duration projects (**\$25,000 to \$100,000, 1 year**) to obtain foundational results, and larger, more programmatic proposals (**\$100,000+, ~3 years**). Please note that smaller project-based proposals can use their results to apply again to the MWCG for a programmatic proposal at a later call.

2.1 Collaboration Liaisons

Each institution has selected a “Collaboration Liaison” that will help researchers find potential partners. Researchers looking to pursue a collaborative project can contact the Collaboration Liaison at their non-host institution for direction on possible contacts.

- HBHL Collaboration Liaison: Contact the HBHL support team (HBHL@mcgill.ca)
- BrainsCAN Collaboration Liaison: Contact the BrainsCAN support team (brainscan@uwo.ca)

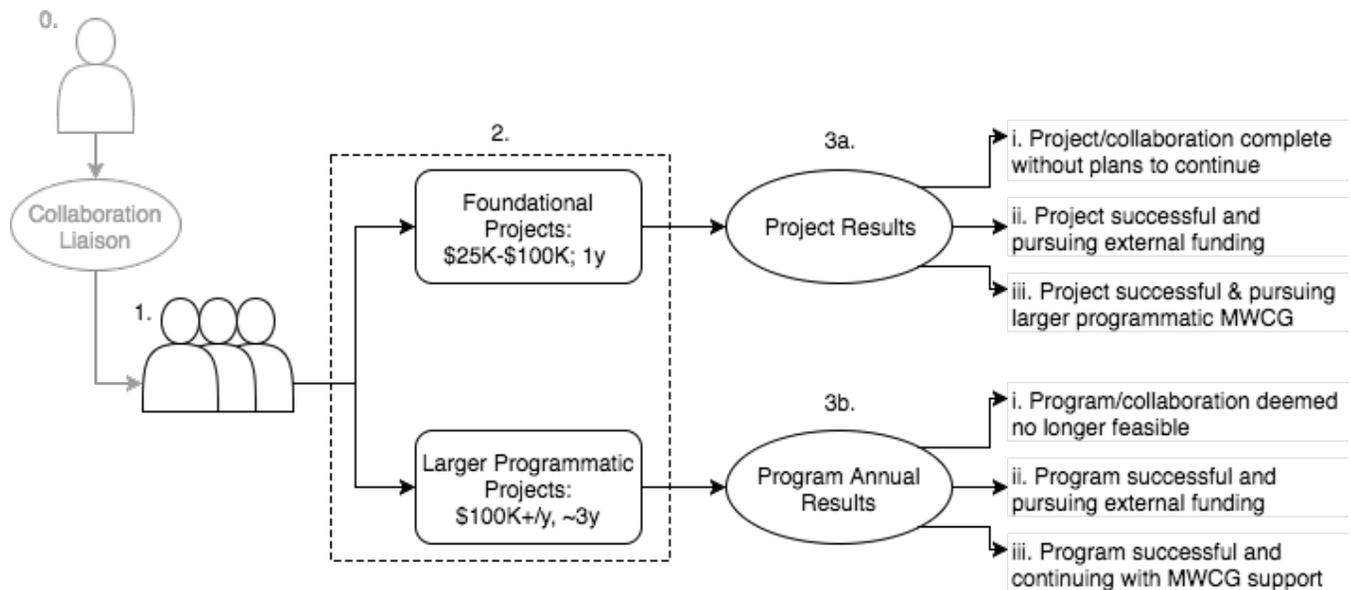


Figure 1: McGill-Western Collaboration Grant (MWCG) Application Workflow. (1) Teams of researchers comprised of eligible faculty from McGill and Western will assemble to submit an application to this program. (Note: Researchers looking to pursue a collaborative project can contact the Collaborative Liaison at their non-host institute for direction on possible contacts) (2) The applications will be informally streamed based on size and duration. (3a) For foundational projects (1y), at their completion, the research team will decide either to stop the collaboration, pursue external funding, or build on the team’s success and reapply to the MWCG at the programmatic level. (3b) For programmatic awards, progress against milestones will be evaluated annually. At that time, research teams must decide to either discontinue the program, pursue external funding or apply for MWCG renewal.

3.0 Proposal Details

3.1 Proposal Eligibility

Proposals must clearly contribute to the strategic priorities of HBHL and BrainsCAN (Refer to the [HBHL Strategic Research Plan](#) and [BrainsCAN Alignment/Steering document](#)). All project types are acceptable from discovery-based science to end-user translational research. Projects should be novel and not currently funded from any other source. If the project has been previously submitted for funding, this must be disclosed in the application and the reviewer comments attached.

3.1.1 *Leverage CFREF Resources*

Whenever possible projects are encouraged to leverage other CFREF institutional investments. For example, accessing infrastructure or innovations support by either HBHL or BrainsCAN is encouraged.

3.1.1.1 *BrainsCAN Cores*

The BrainsCAN Cores provide BrainsCAN researchers with unprecedented access to world-renowned suites of research infrastructure. Successful

applicants will have access to the Cores' infrastructure and resources, as well as any preferential user rates available to BrainsCAN related projects. Each project will indicate which cores will be utilized during the proposed research. The cores include:

- Computational Core
- Human Cognition and Sensorimotor Core
- Imaging Core
- Non-Human Primate Core
- Rodent Cognition Core

3.1.1.2 HBHL Core Facilities & Platforms

- NeuroHub & Machine Learning
- Brain Imaging Centre (BIC)
- LORIS & CBRAIN
- BRAMS – International Laboratory for Brain, Music and Sound Research
- Clinical neuroscience Platform
- Animal Models Platform
- Cellular and Tissue Models Platform
- Social Sciences Platform

3.2 Team Eligibility

3.2.1 *Lead Research Team*

Each project must be led by a research team composed of one McGill AND one Western faculty member. These researchers must hold an eligible academic appointment with a significant research component. Interdisciplinary and diverse research teams are encouraged. A research team may submit one [1] application per call.

3.2.2 *Additional Co-applicants*

Research teams can have additional co-applicants from McGill or Western provided they hold an eligible academic appointment with a significant research component. There is no limit to submissions as a co-applicant.

3.2.3 *Collaborator / Industry Partner / Other*

Active participation of colleagues and partners both internal and external to McGill and Western is highly encouraged. These partners do not provide a CV/biosketch, but are required to provide letters of support outlining their involvement and contributions to the project.

3.3 Budget & Term

To allow the most flexibility in project design, and to encourage innovative and transformational work, there are no set budget or term thresholds. Although all reasonable budgets that meet the CFREF eligibility criteria will be considered, it is encouraged that budgets

from smaller projects will be up to \$100K, while a larger program's budget will be \$100K or higher. Similarly, project term length appropriate for the research aims should be between 1 and 3 years.

3.3.1 *Expenses Eligibility*

Eligible costs include, but are not limited to, any direct cost of research, workshops, compensation-related expenses (i.e. salary and benefits), travel costs, knowledge mobilization costs, etc. Ineligible costs include, but are not limited to, capital expenditures on research facilities, and any infrastructure (other than small lab operating equipment). For the full list and description of all eligible expenses please consult the [CFREF website](#).

3.3.1.1 *Salary Support*

Salary support is an eligible expense; however, funds requested to pay trainees or support staff currently funded by other grants will need to be justified to demonstrate that the MWCG is not merely being used to offset funds normally paid by operating grants.

3.3.2 *HBHL / BrainsCAN Expense Breakdown*

The budgets will be divided between HBHL and BrainsCAN based on the specifics of the proposals. For salaries, the home/primary institution will be responsible for the salary support based on their internal guidelines. For operational costs, the institution where the expense is incurred will be responsible. Lastly, for any joint expenditures (communications costs, knowledge dissemination, etc.), the cost will be shared between HBHL and BrainsCAN.

4.0 Application Process

4.1 Application Forms

All application forms are available on the program website. The application must be completed and signed by the lead researchers. Each applicant (lead and co-applicants) must also provide a signed Biosketch that includes current funding with values.

4.2 Research On-line Administration:

Please refer to your institution for practices regarding grant administration.

- For Western, the lead applicant will submit a ROLA proposal. To complete a ROLA proposal go to <http://uwo.ca/research/rds/ROLA/ROLAFrameset.html> and select the New ROLA button corresponding to the BrainsCAN Award. Please note: this ROLA proposal will reflect the budgeted funds that will be used at Western.
- For McGill, the lead applicant will submit an OSR Checklist. To complete the OSR Checklist go to <https://www.mcgill.ca/research/researchers/formsandresources>. Please note: this OSR Checklist will reflect the budgeted funds that will be used at McGill.

4.3 Submission to HBHL & BrainsCAN

The completed application form must be submitted as a single PDF to HBHL (complete the webform at <https://www.mcgill.ca/hbhl/mcgill-western-collaboration-grants-application>) AND to BrainsCAN (send by Email to brainscan@uwo.ca). The inaugural funding call will take place in the spring of 2018, with an application deadline of 5:00 pm on **May 1, 2018**. The MWCG Review Panel is committed to avoiding unnecessary delays to research and will endeavor to provide a funding decision within 8-12 weeks from application submission.

4.4 Application Support

For McGill, address any questions to the HBHL Support Team (HBHL@mcgill.ca).

For Western, contact brainscan@uwo.ca or Ryan Salewski, Project Manager (ext: 86801; ryan.salewski@uwo.ca).

5.0 Review Process

For more detailed descriptions of the review process please reference the program website with the Review Panel terms of reference, and scoring rubrics.

5.1 MWCG Review Panel

The Review Panel will be appointed by the McGill-Western CFREF Working Group. This panel will have equal McGill/Western representation, as well as a wide range of research expertise to allow meaningful review of the diverse applications encouraged by this program. The panel members will be drawn from a pool of qualified reviewers each cycle based on the requirements of the applications received. Non-voting attendees will be present from HBHL / BrainsCAN to facilitate the logistical aspects of the review process and record meeting minutes.

5.2 Review Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on the following range of criteria:

5.2.1 *Relevance to HBHL / BrainsCAN's overall objectives*

- To what extent does the proposed research contribute to one or more of the HBHL and BrainsCAN strategic and impact priorities? (refer to alignment / steering documents).
- Is the proposed research transformational as defined as research with an inherent high degree of uncertainty and the capability to produce a major impact on important problems in the field of neuroscience?

5.2.2 *Merit of Research*

- Originality and innovation: Is the project truly novel in terms of the hypotheses/research questions addressed, novel technology/methodology, and/or novel applications of current technology/methodology. Please note, replication studies of significant importance are acceptable, but will still be evaluated on their transformative impact to the field.

- Significance and expected contributions to research: What will be the likely impact of the research? Does the project have the capacity to significantly impact the study of circuits underlying behaviour?
- Clarity and scope of objectives: objectives should be clearly defined and demonstrated through the research plan.
- Clarity and appropriateness of methodology: Applications must be clear and logical. Choice of methodology should be clearly justified (e.g. why is imaging necessary to address this problem?). Sample sizes and choice of samples should be clearly justified (the use of formal power analyses to justify sample sizes is strongly encouraged).
- Clarity and appropriateness of the HQP training plan: The skills and experience developed should be described.
- Feasibility: Will the applicant's expertise and the proposed methodology allow the objectives to be reached within the proposed time frame?

5.2.3 *Research Team*

- Excellence, coherence and interdisciplinary nature of the research team
- Expertise and achievements of the applicants and collaborators, as demonstrated by training experience and scientific productivity over the last five years
- Ability of the applicants and their collaborators to successfully and appropriately disseminate research findings, as demonstrated by knowledge translation activities (publications, presentations, briefings, media engagements, etc.)
- Appropriateness of the team of applicants and collaborators to carry out the proposed research, in terms of complementarity of expertise and synergistic potential

5.2.4 *Knowledge Mobilization and Impact*

- Potential for knowledge and technology exchange extending beyond the research team and partner collaborators to other project partners, and to other research and user communities.
- Effective collaboration with the private, public and not-for-profit sectors in technology, market development, and public policy development.
- The proposal must identify how the project results will benefit the partners, how the research will contribute to increasing the national and international visibility of HBHL and BrainsCAN, and how the impact of the research results will benefit society.

5.2.5 *Budget*

- Eligibility/appropriateness of expenses
- Appropriateness of this funding source, as opposed to other existing options

- Justification for the level and duration of funding requested related to stated objectives and scope of proposed research
- Does the budget request relate well to the proposed methodology and the expected results in terms of scale and feasibility of research?

5.3 Adjudication Process

The Review Panel will evaluate the applications with each member providing a completed scoring rubric. The Review Panel will meet to consolidate scores and comments, and reach a consensus decision on each MWCG application. There will be a mechanism for the Review Panel to request clarification or additional information, if required, in the form of a written request. The applicant will have 1 week to respond. Furthermore, if there is sufficient variance in the scoring or it is felt that more detail is needed to properly evaluate the proposal, the applicant may be asked to present in-person to the Review Panel.

5.3.1 *External Peer Review*

The Review Panel will reserve the option to request external peer review for any application if there is insufficient expertise to evaluate the specific scientific aims or assess the transformational impact of the research.

5.4 Final Award Decision

The final funding decision will be ratified by the McGill-Western CFREF Working Group based on the recommendation and scoring by the Review Panel. The applicant will receive detailed feedback and comments. All funding decisions will be audited annually by both the HBHL and BrainsCAN Boards and International Scientific Advisory Boards (ISAB).

6.0 Post Award Requirements

6.1 Award Finalization Process

Successful projects will be required to provide additional information to finalize the award and have the funds released. These will include:

- Project Plan with specific milestones: Templates available on the program website
- Research Data Management (RDM) Plan: Awardees are strongly encouraged to ensure that data resulting from their research will be made open and to include data sharing as part of their applications for approval by appropriate ethics boards. Open data repositories such as Github, Slideshare, Open Science Framework and OpenfMRI, among others, make it possible for researchers to make their data open. Applicants should submit a brief Research Data Management Plan that outlines how they will ensure that data resulting from CFREF-funded research activity will eventually become open. If applicants deem it impossible to make their data open, they should provide a rationale for their decision not to make their data open.
- It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that all required ethics certifications are in place prior to starting the experiments.

6.2 Award time period

Each award will be for one [1] year from the initiation of funding. The researcher may wish to delay the initiation of funding for a variety of reasons including recruitment of specialized HQP.

Funding must be initialized within 6 months of project approval. All eligible expenses must be incurred in this period, or an extension requested prior to the end of the award cycle.

6.2.1 Extension requests

The award recipients may request an extension to use the funds for a maximum of 6 additional months. The lead researchers will provide the rationale for the extension, and a plan for spending, to HBHL and BrainsCAN for the McGill-Western CFREF Working Group to review.

6.3 Reapplication/Renewal Process

Since MWCGs can fund multi-year programs with funding distributed based on a one [1] year period, successful applicants will need to utilize the reapplication/renewal process. A similar process to that described above for the initial application will be used for both the submission and review of the renewal application. The reapplication/renewal must be submitted prior to the funding end-date. Programs with low or no productivity may have their funding discontinued or a probationary period invoked.

6.4 Expectation of Seeking External Funding

For all MWCG, there is an expectation that awardees will seek external funding. For example, the research team may wish to leverage single year MWCG project results towards a CIHR Foundation Scheme Grant, instead of applying for another MWCG. A similar option can be pursued following any year of a multi-year program with external funding being sought rather than the reapplication/renewal process. If the program is successfully funded by an external agency, then it will no longer be eligible for the MWCG.

6.5 Recognition and reporting

The award recipients should acknowledge CFREF, HBHL and BrainsCAN in all related presentations and publications. On an annual basis, successful applicants will be required to complete progress reports outlining how the funds were spent, including how this grant enriched their research and contributed to transforming the field of neuroscience. These reports will be coordinated through the Project Managers.

6.6 Frequency of application

There are no restrictions on the number of applications or awards a research team is able to submit or hold. However, the limitation of one submission as a unique McGill/Western lead research team per call is in effect. Please note that capacity and resource dedication will be evaluated for laboratories seeking concurrent MWCG funding.