



**ICanCME Research Network  
SMART Grant Program  
Call for Proposals: 2026**

## **BACKGROUND**

The Interdisciplinary Canadian Collaborative Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ICanCME) Research Network is a national research network funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). Our mandate is focused on *initiating, supporting, and sustaining innovative and collaborative Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) research in Canada*. The network is committed to a patient-centred research program from discovery to implementation science, with the ultimate goal of finding the cause(s) and possible treatments for ME, thereby addressing and minimizing the health impact of ME among Canadians.

The overarching goal of this competition is to promote **excellence in ME research** by developing and sustaining collaborative research amongst Canadian researchers, clinicians and patient partners.

## **SMART Grants - Objectives**

- Promote the development of new interdisciplinary collaborative ME research teams, where researchers, clinicians and patient partners are co-leaders.
- Foster research excellence (including a stimulating and inclusive environment for research training and patient partnership)
- Foster respectful research design that increases accessibility and inclusion within research.

## **Mandatory Considerations Before You Apply**

To achieve the highest level of research quality, all applications to the SMART Grant Program must:

1. **Align** with ICanCME's adopted [Research Roadmap Priorities](#).
2. **Embed meaningful patient partnership**. Successful proposals will be paired with knowledgeable patient partners by ICanCME, and will receive support and education to ensure meaningful partnership.



## Funds

- Each SMART Grant is **\$75,000, for one year.**

The findings of this project should help enhance your team's ability to secure national and international research funding by developing preliminary data, finalizing key validation steps or completing a proof-of-concept.

## Eligibility

- The Nominated Principal Applicant must hold an academic appointment as a Researcher, Clinician or as Clinical-Scientist at a Canadian University or Research Institute.
- The team must represent a minimum of three Canadian institutions<sup>1</sup>.
- The team must include a junior investigator and it is strongly encouraged to identify this person as a Co-Principal Applicant when applicable.
- The research project is applicable to **Canadian** settings but could include global partners and collaborators if appropriate.
- The host institution has the capacity to undertake a Request for Human Ethical Review and/or Animal Care Review when applicable.
- CIHR or NIH biosketch CV for the Nominated Principal Applicant (NPA).
- Ethics, animal and/or biohazard certificates (if applicable). (Those certificates are mandatory prior to the transfer of funds.)
- CIHR-IMHA Patient Partnership modules certificate (required).
- All applicants are registered as members of the ICanCME Research Network **prior to submission of the application.**

## Reporting

The successful teams will be required to submit a summary report, within 3 months of the project's completion. ICanCME Research Network and CIHR support should be acknowledged on any publication, report and/or presentation resulting from the funded project.

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<sup>1</sup> Institutions include universities, hospitals, colleges, research institutes, centres and other organizations. For more information see <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/34190.html#i>.



## Timeline

Webinar: Researchers, clinicians and patient partners interested to submit a SMART grant application are invited to register and attend a team-building workshop, addressing key issues of this new research program. The webinar will be organized in English and French and will be held on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2026:

Registration for English (January 27, 3 pm EST)

[https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_luvp9hCJRy-UbsWYbqA-Lw](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_luvp9hCJRy-UbsWYbqA-Lw)

Registration for French (January 27th, 4 pm EST)

[https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_QDg5B3VQQq-b005ba-SXfw](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_QDg5B3VQQq-b005ba-SXfw)

Application Deadline: Proposals must be submitted by **11:59 pm Atlantic Standard Time, March 30th, 2026.**

Anticipated Decision Date: **June 1st, 2026**

Grant Starting Date: **July 1st, 2026**

## Application Instructions

The application form (pages 5 and 6) will form the basic structure for your proposal. It must be **completed fully** to be considered for review. Please fill the present form for your proposal. Your submitted application must not exceed a total of 5 pages (excluding references and appendices), and includes the team description (maximum 1 page) and the budget (maximum 1/2 page). All sections of the submitted form will use a Times New Roman 12-pt font and a minimum margin of 2 cm.

*Supporting documents will be attached as Appendices and not count towards your total page count:*

- CIHR or NIH biosketch CV for the NPA only.
- Letter of support from the Associate Dean of Research or Director of Research (or equivalent) for the NPA's institution.
- Ethics, animal and/or biohazard certificates (if available).
- Certificate of completion for CIHR-IMHA Patient Partnership modules (required).

If your project is selected for funding, ICanCME will match you with **two patient partners** who will be engaged fully and for the duration of the project.

Please see attached a tool to support the planning and implementation of respectful and inclusive patient partnership.



There are also training modules available through CIHR-IMHA, for both researchers and patient partners. While the NPA **must** complete this training to receive a certificate, we encourage **all team members** to participate in this training too. An intro is available [here](#).

## **Application Checklist**

Before submitting your application to ICanCME, have you verified the following...

Completed **all** sections of the application:

- Identified research roadmap priority
- Provide a research proposal, with team description and budget, as per the instructions provided
- Answered additional administrative questions

Attached **all** supporting documents (*as Appendices*):

- CIHR or NIH biosketch for the Nominated Principal Applicant (NPA)
- Ethics, animal and/or biohazard certificates (*if applicable*)
- Certificate of completion for CIHR-IMHA Patient Partnership modules (required)

## **Reviewers**

Applicants **may** identify potential reviewers that should be **excluded** due to real or potential conflict of interest:

Reviewer 1 – Name and Contact Information:

Reviewer 2 – Name and Contact Information:

Reviewer 3 – Name and Contact Information:



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**APPLICATION FORM**

Name of Nominated Principal Applicant:

Team Members:

Host Institution:

Title of Application:

Amount Requested:

Research Roadmap Priorities	Please verify which research priority (or priorities) your proposal aligns with (✓)
Research Roadmap Priority 1: Chronic Infection	
Research Roadmap Priority 2: Immune System	
Research Roadmap Priority 3: Central Nervous System and Peripheral Nervous System	
Research Roadmap Priority 4: Cardiovascular Circulation	
Research Roadmap Priority 5: Metabolism	
Research Roadmap Priority 6: Physiology	
Research Roadmap Priority 7: Less Studied Pathologies	
Research Roadmap Priority 8: Genomics/Genetic Susceptibility	

**Research Proposal**

Your research proposal must answer the following requests. Please provide your answers under each request, to ensure clarity for the reviewers.

1. Please identify which **Research Roadmap Priority** (or priorities) is being addressed in your application, and **how** your research project is doing so.
2. Please describe the **significance of the research** to the field of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis science.
3. Please describe the **project design, methodology and instruments** and ensure they are **appropriate and respectful** for this condition and population.
4. Please list all **interdisciplinary team members** and affiliations (1 page maximum). This must include a Nominated Principal Applicant, and at least one applicant from each category: a clinician, a mid-career or senior researcher, and a junior researcher. Please describe how each member will contribute their relevant expertise to the research project.
5. Please describe **how** the research team will create an environment that is **accessible and inclusive** for patient partners and how their **expertise** will be incorporated into the project.

6. Please describe how the research team will create an environment that is **accessible, inclusive** and **supportive** for **new and emerging researchers**.
7. Please describe the **intended impact** of the project in the short-term and long-term for the ME community.
8. Please describe the project’s **knowledge and dissemination plan**.
9. Please provide a **one-year budget** (½ page maximum), with justifications for each budget line item, using the following template.<sup>2</sup>

**Budget Template**

Cost Type	Cost Per Unit	Unit	Description	Justification	Total
<b>Personnel</b>					
<b>Consumables</b>					
<b>Services</b>					
<b>Knowledge Mobilization</b>					
(Add or remove rows as needed)				<b>Total Requested:</b>	

10. Please describe **how sex and/or gender considerations will be integrated** into your research proposal. *For instance, sex and gender should be incorporated to enable the identification of sex-specific patterns in ME/CFS biology and clinical presentation, thereby improving the interpretation of biomarkers and outcomes across individuals. Considering gender-related factors should further help contextualize variability in symptoms and disease experience, supporting more accurate and inclusive conclusions.*
11. Please indicate whether this application proposes research involving Indigenous peoples. Also, specify if your proposal addresses [TCP 2 – Chapter 9](#) Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada and Indigenous partnering community/organizational ethical guidelines.

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<sup>2</sup> Please note the budgeted expenses must be eligible as per CIHR Grants and Awards Guide, Appendix: Tri-Agency Guide on Financial Administration, Part 2: Use of grant funds (available online: [https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/InterAgency-Interorganismes/TAFA-AFTO/guide-guide\\_eng.asp](https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/InterAgency-Interorganismes/TAFA-AFTO/guide-guide_eng.asp) ). Note that funds cannot be used to purchase equipment. It is noted that an exception will be made for small equipment with a total value below \$500 if well justified. Budgets exceeding \$75,000 must include a plan for obtaining the additional funds (e.g., Foundations, Faculties).



**Additional Administrative Question**

Does this project require review and approval for Animal Care?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide the protocol ID number and/or name of IRB below:

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Does this project require Human Ethical Review?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide the protocol ID number and/or name of IRB below:

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Does this project require Biohazard certifications?

- Yes
- No