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2021 RESEARCH GRANT COMPETITION COMPETITION GUIDE

COMPETITION TIMELINES

Activity	Date
Letter of intent deadline	April 29, 2021, 5pm (EST)
Applicants informed of eligibility to submit full application	May 21, 2021
Full application deadline	July 22, 2021, 5pm (EST)
Funding results announced (tentative)	December 2021
Funding start date (tentative)	January 2022

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The goal of the 2021 Research Grant Competition is to fund research that advances Fighting Blindness Canada's (FBC's) mission to accelerate the development and availability of treatments and cures for blinding eye diseases. The program allows applications from all areas of vision research and will prioritize funding projects that have the greatest potential to advance FBC's mission.

The program is open to independent investigators and/or research teams with a principal investigator from a Canadian institution and provides a **budget of up to \$100,000 a year for up to two years**. Applications will be evaluated by a rigorous peer-review process based on scientific excellence and innovation, feasibility of the proposed work, track record of the investigator team and potential to advance FBC's mission and have an impact on individuals affected by blinding eye diseases.

FUNDING DETAILS

Grant budgets can be up to \$100,000 per year for up to two years (maximum \$200,000 per grant). The number of grants to be awarded will be determined by budget availability. Funding will be provided to support the direct costs of research, including supplies, salaries (see Eligibility Requirements for more details), and equipment associated with the proposed work. Equipment requests cannot exceed 5% of the requested budget and indirect costs are not eligible. FBC does not provide overlap funding. It is the



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responsibility of the Principal Investigator to notify us if you receive other sources of financial support for a grant under review or once awarded.

PEER REVIEW PANELS

Multidisciplinary peer review panels consisting of scientific experts with broad but relevant expertise will review the full applications. There will be three grant review panels and applicants are asked to select the most fitting panel to apply to, however, FBC reserves the right to determine the panel with the most relevant expertise to review the application. The three panels are:

- **Panel A:** Discovery and translational research on the anterior segment of the eye. Including but not limited to research involving cornea, lens and trabecular meshwork.
- **Panel B:** Discovery and translational research on the posterior segment of the eye. Including but not limited to research involving retina, inherited retinal diseases, AMD, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma. Projects related to brain processing related to retinal degenerative diseases will be reviewed by this panel.
- **Panel C:** Clinical research. Including but not limited to research involving patients, epidemiology, vision rehabilitation and health systems.

APPLICATION PROCESS

There are two steps to the application. Applicants must submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) by **April 29, 2021**. Eligible applicants will be contacted by May 21 and invited to submit a full application, due **July 22, 2021**. Only applicants who submit an LOI and receive confirmation of their eligibility from FBC can submit a full application.

All documents should be submitted through the link on the [website](https://fightingblindness.ca/research/for-researchers)
(fightingblindness.ca/research/for-researchers)

A maximum of one application per Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator will be permitted in this competition. However, an individual who is named as a Principal or Co-Investigator may be named as a Collaborator on additional grants.

To facilitate peer-review, we ask applicants to submit applications in English.

Please see Letter of Intent Form and Application Form (fightingblindness.ca/research/for-researchers) for more details but briefly:



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For the LOI, please submit the following as a single PDF document:

Section	Format	Section Description
1	Letter of Intent Form	2021 Research Grant Competition Letter of Intent Form: Available for download here .
2	Free text, 250 words	Research Proposal Summary: Provide a brief description of the proposed research including significance, aims and objectives, approach and research methods.
3	Free text, 250 words	Statement of Impact: Clearly state potential impact of this research for the prevention and treatment of blinding eye diseases and blindness.

For the full application, please submit the following as a single PDF document:

Section	Format	Section Description
1	Application Form	2021 Research Grant Competition Application Form: Available for download on website . Electronic or scanned signatures are acceptable
2	Free text, 7 pages maximum including figures; no page limit for references	Research Proposal: Provide a clear description of the proposed research including descriptions of methods and a discussion of anticipated results. Applicants are strongly encouraged to provide preliminary data to illustrate the feasibility of the proposed experiments, and their ability to undertake these.
3	Free text, 1 page maximum	Project Timeline: Identify key activities within each aim of your proposal, and when you expect to complete those activities within the timeline of the grant. May be presented as a narrative or a table.
4	Budget Module Template	Budget Module: Excel template available for download on website .



5	Free text, 1 page maximum	Budget Justification: Detail necessary to explain the staffing and resources requested in the previous section
6	Free text, 5 pages maximum each	CV: Maximum 5-page CV that showcases key accomplishments. We recommend using the NIH Biosketch format, but this is not mandatory. Each Principal and Co-Investigator that is receiving funding should submit a CV.
7	5 pages maximum (Optional)	Letters of support: Refer to the competition guide for more details.

REVIEW CRITERIA AND SCORING

Reviewers will evaluate specific criteria to determine each proposal's alignment with the mission of Fighting Blindness Canada (FBC). Reviewers will provide written comments about each of the following criteria:

1. **Scientific Excellence** – the extent to which the proposed research is based on a strong rationale, introduces innovative ideas, and solid hypotheses. Is the proposed research competitive on the international scale? Is the proposed research more likely to succeed than other similar research being carried out by other groups, and if so, why? What is unique about the project?
2. **Approach and Deliverables** – Are the research methods to be used appropriate and sufficiently robust to reach the stated objectives of the project and ensure that high quality results will be generated? Is the budget appropriate and reasonable? Is the plan logical with specific deliverables identified to ensure the project's success and completion within the proposed timeframe?
3. **Excellence of the team** – the extent to which the Principal Investigator and team of Co-investigators/Collaborators have the relevant expertise and proven track record.
4. **Impact and relevance for vision loss** – the extent to which the project has the potential to benefit individuals affected by blinding eye diseases. What unmet need does the project address in the therapeutic landscape? What is the potential impact that this project will have on the field and for patients (directly and indirectly)?



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Proposals will also be given a score of 1 to 10 according to the scale below. Proposals that receive a consensus score of 7 or greater are considered fundable.

FUNDABLE		
Exceptional - exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses	10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outstanding - extremely strong with negligible weaknesses	9	<input type="checkbox"/>
Excellent - very strong with only some minor weaknesses	8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very good – very strong but with numerous minor weaknesses	7	<input type="checkbox"/>
NOT FUNDABLE		
Good - strong but at least one moderate weakness	6	<input type="checkbox"/>
Satisfactory - some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fair - some strengths but with at least one major weakness	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marginal - a few strengths and a few major weaknesses	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor - very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very poor - no strengths and numerous major weaknesses	1	<input type="checkbox"/>

FBC is committed to the highest standards of integrity in research. The major concerns are fabrication or falsification of data and plagiarism, including failure to acknowledge unpublished work, but any action that is inconsistent with integrity is considered scientific misconduct. Applications not consistent with these standards may be disqualified from the competition and the host institution notified.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

See below for details about applicant eligibility requirements. Any question of eligibility or unusual circumstances not described will be reviewed and an assessment made by FBC. A maximum of one application per Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator is permitted. However, an individual who is named as a Principal or Co-Investigator may be named as a Collaborator on additional applications.

Principal Investigator

Each grant application can have only one Principal Investigator. The Principal Investigator is responsible for the direction of the proposed activities, assumes administrative and financial responsibility for the grant and receives correspondence related to the grant.



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The Principal Investigator must hold a firm academic position which allows the individual to engage in independent research activities for the duration of the project and includes the ability to supervise trainees and publish research results. They must be based in, or formally affiliated with, an accredited Canadian Host Institution such as a university, hospital or research institute. Graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, research associates, Adjunct Professors or Status only appointments (except where they hold a firm academic position at another Canadian institution), technical support staff, or investigators based outside of Canada are not eligible to be a Principal Investigator. The Principal Investigator is not eligible to receive salary support from a grant.

Applicants who do not yet hold an eligible position

Investigators who have a firm offer of an academic position (as defined above) at an eligible Host Institution and where the appointment is not contingent on the success of a pending application, can submit an application as Principal Investigator provided that the position commences by the start date of the grant. In such cases, a letter of support from an appropriate authority of the Host Institution must be included providing clear details on the exact nature of the appointment (including title and major responsibilities), as well as the expected start date and duration of the appointment.

Co-Investigator

A researcher designated as Co-Investigator is a researcher who will take responsibility for particular administrative and scientific aspects of the research project. Co-Investigators must hold an academic position which allows the individual to engage in independent research activities for the duration of the project and includes the ability to supervise trainees and publish research results. Co-Investigators may be based outside Canada. This category can include Adjunct Professors or Status only appointments. Graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, research associates and technical support staff are not eligible to be Co-Investigators. Co-Investigators can request grant funding but are not eligible to receive salary support from a grant.

Collaborator

Collaborators are individuals who will make substantial contributions to the research project, such as helping with specific techniques or providing tools and reagents but are not requesting funding. Please include letters of support from collaborators as needed.

Highly Qualified Personnel

Students, postdoctoral fellows, research associates, technicians and lay contributors may be included in this category. Highly qualified personnel may receive salary support from a grant.



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CONTACT US

If you have any questions about the competition please contact Larissa Moniz, Director, Research and Mission Programs at research@fightingblindness.ca