



CLINICIAN-SCIENTIST EMERGING LEADER AWARD 2026 COMPETITION GUIDE

COMPETITION TIMELINES

Activity	Date
Registration of interest deadline	May 7, 2026, 5pm (ET)
Applicants informed of eligibility to submit full application	Week of May 11, 2026
Full application deadline	June 11, 2026, 5pm (ET)
Funding results announced (tentative)	October 2026
Funding start date (tentative)	October 1, 2026

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Fighting Blindness Canada's **Clinician-Scientist Emerging Leader (CSEL) award** supports ophthalmologists and optometrists in Canada who integrate research into their careers. This competition will fund projects with the potential to significantly impact Canadians living with a retinal eye disease including, but not limited to inherited retinal diseases, age related macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma.

Applicants can apply for funding at two levels, up to \$20,000 or up to \$40,000 over two years, dependent on the amount of protected research time they have. More details are provided below.

COMPETITION FUNDER

For more than 50 years, Fighting Blindness Canada has helped shape the future of blinding eye disease research in Canada. We fund world-class research, share trusted resources, and advocate for stronger health policies to advance the understanding, prevention, and treatment of vision loss. As Canada's leading knowledge hub for vision loss, we connect lived experience with scientific discovery to turn research into real-world impact.

CONTACT

For inquiries, contact:

Larissa Moniz PhD

Director, Research & Mission Programs

research@fightingblindness.ca

fightingblindness.ca/research/for-researchers



ELIGIBILITY AND OTHER CRITERIA

Eligibility Criteria

- Candidates must hold or be enrolled in a clinical doctoral degree (MD, OD etc.).
- Preferred candidates are in the final year of their clinical doctoral degree or enrolled in an ophthalmology or optometry residency or fellowship program in Canada.
- Candidates must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents of Canada.
- Candidates are ineligible if:
 - They are holding or have held a CSEL award.
 - It has been more than 8 years* since being awarded their clinical doctoral degree at the start of the award (e.g. October 1, 2026)
- Applicants must identify one or two mentors who are active clinician-scientists with faculty appointments, to guide their research proposal.

** Justified career interruptions (e.g. parental, medical leave or family care) will be considered when calculating eligibility windows and should be described in the Registration of Interest form.*

Institutional Support

Host institutions must provide resources to support the applicant. Examples of institutional support include donated equipment and space or institutional funded staff time.

Institutional support must be documented in the application's Institutional Support section (Section 6). Relevant contributions can also be noted at the end of the Budget section (Section 5) of the application but should not be included in the budget request.

FUNDS AVAILABLE

It is anticipated that up to three awards will be funded in this competition. Applicants can apply for two levels of funding depending on their eligibility.

- 1) Up to \$20,000 (up to \$10,000 per year for two years)
- 2) Up to \$40,000 (Up to \$20,000 per year for two years)

To qualify for the higher level of funding, applicants must have over 60% guaranteed protected research time for the entirety of their award. Applicants with 60% protected research time in only one year may request higher funding for that year only (e.g. Y1, 20% research time, \$10,000; Y2, 60% protected research, \$20,000; Total budget \$30,000).

Applicants must specify protected research time in the statement of institutional support, confirmed by the program or institution director's signature.



Funding can be used to support the direct costs of research, including supplies, salaries (e.g. trainees and research support staff) and equipment (capped at 10% of budget). Up to 10% of total budget can be used for professional development including travel or training. Indirect costs are not eligible.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applicants must complete a two step-process.

Registration of Interest

DEADLINE: May 7, 2026, 5pm EST

Please complete and submit the *Registration of Interest* form through the “**Submit Here**” button at fightingblindness.ca/research/for-researchers/

APPLICATION

DEADLINE: June 11, 2026, 5pm EST

- Applications will be assessed on the scientific merit of the research plan and its potential to impact clinical care and patient outcomes (50%) and on the excellence of the candidate as demonstrated by prior training and previous research efforts (50%).
- Only applicants that submit the *Registration of Interest* form by the deadline are eligible to submit a full application.
- Submit completed application through the “**Submit Here**” button at fightingblindness.ca/research/for-researchers/

Formatting Guidelines

****Please respect word/page limits. Applications exceeding these limits may not be accepted****

- To facilitate peer-review, submit all documents in English.
- Use black ink for text and where word limits are not specified use single-spaced text, Calibri font, pt.11.
- The application **should be submitted as a single PDF document** in the order specified below.
 - Letters of references can be included in the single PDF document or submitted separately.
 - Do not create the PDF from scanned documents (signature page excepted). PDFs should be created by converting from Word or other compatible formats.
 - Delete instruction pages before saving as PDF.
- Include the last name of the applicant in the file name e.g. Smith_CSEL Application



Section	Format	Section Description
1	Application Form	Application Form: Available in 2026 CSEL Application document. Electronic or scanned signatures are acceptable
2	Free text, 1000 word maximum	Career development plan: Should include a clear description of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Candidate's previous training and experience demonstrating a commitment to develop a career as a clinician-scientist.• A career development plan that identifies key activities that the candidate will accomplish and/or professional development events that candidate will participate in to achieve their goal of developing both an independent research career and a clinical practice in Canada.
3	Free text, 1500 word maximum, not exceeding 5 pages. Including figures and tables but not references	Research plan: Should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rationale and aims of the project• Experimental design, methods and analysis• Relevant previous work done in this area
4	Free text, 500 words, not exceeding 1 page	Project Timeline: Identify key activities and milestones for the research plan. May be presented as a narrative, table or figure. If relevant include career development activities.
5	Free text, 1 page maximum	Project Budget: Including detail for staffing, reagents, services. Include details about other funding or resources that will support this project.
6	Free text, 1 page maximum	Statement of Institutional Support: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May include description of the research environment, infrastructure, resources, mentoring and administrative support.• Must clearly identify protected research time.• The statement may be written by the applicant but should be signed by the program or institutional lead confirming



		institutional support and protected research time.
7	Free text, 5 page maximum each	CV for applicant and mentor(s): CV that showcases key accomplishments. <u>Each applicant and mentor should submit a CV.</u>
8	Free text	Two letters of reference: These may be included as part of the single PDF. Alternatively the reference may directly upload the letter through the link on: fightingblindness.ca/research/for-researchers or email it to research@fightingblindness.ca .