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SCN Research Funding Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The Stem Cell Network (SCN) has launched the first of two national research funding competitions planned for SCN's 2025 - 2029 cycle of strategic activity. This multimillion-dollar competition will support world-class, translational, regenerative medicine research, across the research continuum, to facilitate health, social, and economic benefits for Canadians. The competition opens on Tuesday, September 3, 2024, and will support research activities during the 2025 to 2028 period.

An Information Webinar was held on August 14, 2024 that included information about the competition and programs available, as well as a question-and-answer session with SCN community attendees. A recording of the webinar is hosted on [SCN's YouTube channel](#).

New this year, the funding competition includes Joint-Funded awards, in collaboration with the Azrieli Foundation, Breakthrough T1D in conjunction with their Canadian affiliate, JDRF Canada, and CQDM. Please see below for Joint-Funding Partner Specific FAQs.

Programs and Competition Process

WHAT ARE THE VALUE AND DURATION OF STANDARD SCN RESEARCH AWARDS?

Standard SCN award values vary across the different programs. Details can be found in the guidelines for each program. The range starts at \$215,000 and goes up to \$1,100,000 per award. The funding term for all programs is 24 or 36 months, starting April 1, 2025. The values for joint funded awards are typically 20% higher than standard SCN awards – see the Joint-Funding Award Section of this FAQ, below, for more details.

WHO CAN APPLY FOR SCN FUNDING THROUGH THIS COMPETITION?

Regenerative medicine investigators can apply for funds from SCN only if they are based at a Canadian Tri-Agency eligible institution and they themselves are eligible to receive Tri-Agency funding. To be eligible, investigators must meet the CIHR [definition](#) for



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independent researchers and all investigators must have an academic appointment that commences by the effective date of funding and extends until the final reporting date of the award. ONLY the lead and co-investigators can receive SCN funds. Collaborators are defined as Canadian or international collaborators who are not requesting SCN funding but who will be collaborating on the project.

Highly qualified personnel (HQP; e.g., graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, technicians or research associates) must be listed in the HQP section of the full application.

WHAT OPPORTUNITIES EXIST FOR EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS (ECRS)?

SCN is excited to once again offer the ECR Jump Start Awards program which is designed for early career researchers from the health, bio-engineering and social sciences research areas (i.e., within first five years of an initial academic appointment) who are developing a research program with a translational regenerative medicine focus. This program is designed to help ECRs build or develop a stem cell program that can be pursued over the longer term. In addition, all SCN research programs have stated criteria for inclusion of researchers across the spectrum of career experiences. It is expected that translational research projects will be delivered by diverse, multi-disciplinary teams.

HOW DOES BASIC RESEARCH FIT WITHIN SCN'S NEW FUNDING PROGRAM?

SCN's funding program reflects our translational mandate and the emerging Canadian regenerative medicine sector. The Impact Awards program provides researchers at all career stages with a funding avenue for early-stage translational projects that have the potential to develop novel therapeutic approaches for regenerative medicine.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR FUNDING FROM SCN FOR THE 2024 COMPETITION?

Applicants must submit their proposal through an online application process hosted through the [ProposalCentral](#) application portal. All investigators (lead and co-investigators) on a team should register and open an account on [ProposalCentral](#) prior to initiating an application. [ProposalCentral](#) accounts are not required for collaborators or highly qualified personnel (HQP; e.g., graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, technicians or research associates). The lead-investigator's institutional signing authorities (e.g., department or grants administrators) are also required to have a [ProposalCentral](#) account in order to sign-off on the submission of the full application.



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IS A LETTER OF INTENT (LOI) SUBMISSION REQUIRED FOR ALL SCN FUNDING PROGRAMS?

Yes, a two-phase application process will operate for this competition: an LOI and a full application are required and must be completed through the [ProposalCentral](#) application portal. Completion of an LOI is a mandatory first step for all applications. The LOI phase will open on Tuesday, September 3, 2024 and completed LOIs must be submitted in [ProposalCentral](#) by 11:59 p.m. Pacific time on Tuesday, September 24, 2024. LOIs will be used to identify peer review requirements, gauge the level of interest in SCN's programs, and ensure projects fall within SCN's regenerative medicine mandate. Eligible LOIs will be invited to submit a full application on Tuesday, October 1, 2024. The deadline for completed full applications is 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time (2:00 p.m. PT) on Tuesday, December 3, 2024.

WHERE DO I FIND THE PROGRAM GUIDELINES AND DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE APPLICATION PROCESS HOSTED ON PROPOSALCENTRAL?

The program guidelines, LOI and full application instructions for each program will be hosted on [SCN's website](#). Once an application is initiated in the LOI process on ProposalCentral, the full application instructions for each program will then be accessible in the "Download Instructions" section of the LOI or full application on ProposalCentral.

WHEN WILL SCN FUNDING DECISIONS BE ANNOUNCED?

The deadline for applications is Tuesday, December 3, 2024. Complete applications will be reviewed by expert international scientific peer review panels and by SCN's Research Management Committee (RMC), which will make recommendations to SCN's Board of Directors for funding approval. See [SCN's website](#) for more information on SCN's peer review process. The target date for notifying all applicants of outcomes is March 2025.

WILL I GET A COPY OF THE PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS?

Peer review and RMC evaluation and feedback comments will be made accessible to the lead investigator through ProposalCentral for all eligible submitted applications.



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WILL I BE ABLE TO APPLY FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO CONTINUE OR BUILD ON A PROJECT THAT WAS PREVIOUSLY FUNDED BY SCN?

Previously funded investigators are welcome to apply for funding. However, applications must address new aspects of research not covered in the previously funded project.

MY PREVIOUS APPLICATION TO SCN WAS NOT FUNDED. CAN I RE-SUBMIT A REVISED VERSION OF MY APPLICATION?

Yes, SCN welcomes the re-submission of applications from previous funding rounds that have been revised to address the concerns raised by SCN's international review panels. However, please note that all applications to SCN funding competitions are treated as new applications. If a project was submitted to a previous SCN funding round, it is at the applicant's discretion to address any issues raised in prior peer review feedback. Peer reviewers will not be provided access to prior peer review feedback for any previous version of an application.

IF I AM FUNDED BY SCN IN THIS COMPETITION, AM I REQUIRED TO SUBMIT PROGRESS REPORTS FOR REVIEW?

SCN operates a process of [Continual Review](#) on all funded projects. Submission of project progress and final reports to SCN management is **mandatory** and reports will be reviewed by SCN's RMC to evaluate project progress and make recommendations for the continued release of funding for active awards.

CAN I CHANGE DIRECTION ONCE MY RESEARCH IS FUNDED?

SCN understands that evidence should guide research direction, so minor direction changes prompted by new data are considered understandable and potentially desirable. However, investigators should contact SCN prior to initiating substantive changes to the scope and research focus of any SCN-funded project.

DOES SCN OFFER GUIDANCE REGARDING THE USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IN THE DEVELOPMENT OR REVIEW OF SCN APPLICATIONS?

The Government of Canada, in conjunction with the granting agencies, are [currently developing](#) a final guidance document on the use of generative AI in the development or review of research funding. In the interim, SCN follows the [draft guidelines](#) that were published in 2023 – all applicants submitting a research proposal to SCN should read this



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draft guidance carefully. For application review, SCN prohibits reviewers from inputting any part of an application into generative AI tools.

Eligibility and Requirements

DO I HAVE TO BE A FORMER AWARD RECIPIENT WITH SCN TO APPLY FOR FUNDING?

No. SCN welcomes applications from all eligible stem cell and regenerative medicine researchers within Canada. Regenerative medicine investigators can apply for funds from SCN only if they are based at a Canadian Tri-Agency eligible institution and they themselves are eligible to receive Tri-Agency funding.

WILL APPLICATIONS FOCUSED ON GENE THERAPIES/CANCER OR CAR-T/SMALL MOLECULES/DRUGS BE CONSIDERED?

The proposed project must be regenerative in nature and/or use stem cells or a regenerative medicine approach for addressing the proposed problem to be eligible for funding.

CAN I SUBMIT AN APPLICATION FOR A PROJECT THAT IS CURRENTLY BEING FUNDED BY ANOTHER AGENCY OR ORGANIZATION?

Yes, but the request to SCN must cover project work that is **distinct** and not supported by another agency or organization. This overlap between projects should be explained within the application.

CAN A LEAD INVESTIGATOR SUBMIT MORE THAN ONE APPLICATION TO SCN?

All applications from an investigator must describe distinct, non-over-lapping research activity. A lead investigator may submit only one application as a lead investigator per program but can be the lead investigator on applications submitted to different programs (e.g., an investigator may lead one application to the Fueling Biotechnology Awards program and lead one application to the Impact Awards program). A lead investigator may feature as a co-investigator on another application to the same program if the proposed research activity is distinct.



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DOES SCN ACCEPT APPLICATIONS FROM OUTSIDE CANADA?

No, however international collaborators are encouraged and welcome on a project led by a Canadian-based investigator.

IF MY PROPOSED CLINICAL TRIAL HAS NOT RECEIVED CLINICAL TRIAL APPLICATION (CTA) APPROVAL BY THE APPLICATION DEADLINE, CAN IT STILL BE CONSIDERED FOR FUNDING?

A Health Canada Clinical Trial Application (CTA) No Objection Letter is **mandatory for the Clinical Trial Awards program** and should be attached if currently available. Proposed clinical trials that are in the process of obtaining CTA approval from Health Canada can be submitted to SCN for review but a CTA approval letter from Health Canada for the proposed trial must be in place and shared with SCN by February 28, 2025 to be eligible for funding.

IF MY PROPOSED CLINICAL TRIAL RELIES ON A THERAPEUTIC THAT REQUIRES MANUFACTURING, WHAT STATE OF MANUFACTURING READINESS OR DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED?

To ensure that a funded clinical trial can promptly start patient recruitment and treatment, the manufacturing process for the therapy must be ready to go. The applicant **must** provide a clear manufacturing plan, accompanied by a letter of support and contractual agreements from the manufacturing facility that outlines a commitment, costing and timeline for the facility to manufacture the therapy. This information will be used during the peer review process to understand the feasibility of the proposed clinical trial.

Budget and Partnerships

WHAT ARE CONSIDERED ELIGIBLE BUDGET EXPENSES FOR AN SCN PROJECT?

Budget expenditures must follow the Tri-Agency financial guidelines. Indirect Costs and Principal Investigator salaries are not eligible expenditures. Click on the link below to view the [Tri-Agency Guide on Financial Administration](#). Only eligible expense for which investigators are requesting SCN support should be detailed in the budget section of the application.



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WILL NO-COST EXTENSIONS BE GRANTED IF I CANNOT COMPLETE MY RESEARCH IN THE REQUIRED TIMEFRAME?

No. SCN will **not** provide No-Cost Extensions for any awards in the 2025 - 2029 funding cycle.

WILL BUDGET REQUESTS THAT EXCEED A PROGRAM MAXIMUM AWARD AMOUNT BE CONSIDERED?

No. The funds requested from SCN must not exceed the maximum award amount listed in the guidelines.

IS ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT AN ALLOWABLE SCN EXPENSE?

No. Administrative support is not an allowable expense. Administrative support is considered as institutional support and should be listed in the partner funding section.

DO I NEED PARTNER MATCHING FUNDS TO APPLY TO AN SCN PROGRAM?

Yes. SCN-funded projects require partner support (in-kind or cash). Eligible partners include

industry, not-for-profit organizations, foundations, research institutions, health charities and provincial governments. Please note: federal funders (e.g. CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC, CFI, Genome Canada, New Frontiers Research Fund, IRAP) are ineligible for matching.

Note: Although investigator salaries and indirect costs are not eligible budget items, they represent an accessible source of partner matching funds that must be listed as in-kind institutional support (investigator salaries at 10% and indirect costs at 40%).

DO I NEED A LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM A PARTNER?

Yes, partner letters of support are required for actual matching support and letters of support should specifically include reference to the proposed project and any conditions placed on funding. Please provide a letter of support on the letterhead of each partner detailing the extent of their collaboration and a dollar value for their cash and/or in-kind contribution towards the project.

DO PARTNER CONTRIBUTIONS NEED TO BE DEFINED AT THE LOI STAGE?

The LOI submission should provide realistic estimates of the partner contributions. Once the LOI has been submitted, additional partners can be added and the precise details of



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all partner contributions to the project should be described in the submission of the full application.

ARE PARTNERSHIPS WITH INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES PERMITTED, OR ARE THE COMPANIES REQUIRED TO HAVE A BASE IN CANADA?

Partnerships with foreign companies are welcomed and permitted. Note: The Fueling Biotechnology Partnerships Program requires the named partnering biotech to be an early-stage Canadian regenerative medicine biotech company; further details are available in the guidelines for this program.

CAN INDUSTRY PARTNERS RECEIVE A FUNDS FROM AN SCN AWARD?

SCN can only directly fund eligible Canadian academic researchers at eligible Canadian institutions. Funds can be assigned within the budget to cover the costs of services provided by an industry partner.

CAN INDUSTRY PARTNERS BE LOCATED OUTSIDE CANADA?

All SCN programs allow for matching funds from international partners. However, the Fueling Biotechnology Partnerships program requires the main receptor to be an early-stage Canadian biotechnology company. Please refer to the program guidelines for specific information.

WHAT ARE THE RESEARCH SECURITY REQUIREMENTS FOR APPLYING FOR SCN FUNDING?

All applications for SCN funding must comply with the Government of Canada's [Policy on Sensitive Technology Research and Affiliations of Concern \(STRAC\)](#) and the [National Security Guidelines for Research Partnerships](#) (NSGRP). Regenerative medicine (including tissue engineering or gene therapy) is listed as a [Sensitive Technology Research Area](#), so **all applications to SCN must include a check on researchers' affiliations**. At the application stage, all named investigators (lead-investigators, co-investigators, and collaborators) must each complete an [attestation form](#) describing any affiliations with organizations on the Named Research Organization list. For applications that include a private sector partner, the lead-investigator must complete a risk assessment form. Before funds are released, all researchers must complete training courses on Research Security, Dual-Use in Life Science Research, and Insider and Outsider Threats, and provide



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certificates of completion. For detailed information, refer to SCN's Guidance on Research Security for SCN Funding Applications.

SCN Research Funding Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) – Joint Funded Awards

SCN is excited to collaborate with the [Azrieli Foundation](#), [Breakthrough T1D](#) and [CQDM](#) in this funding competition to offer joint-funding award opportunities. The collaborations represent a commitment to support research projects in regenerative medicine. In addition to joint-funding, these collaborations aim to amplify the impact of research through combined expertise and networks. Joint-Funded awards are typically 20% larger than standard SCN awards and have specific areas of focus:

1. Neurodevelopmental disorders in collaboration with the Azrieli Foundation. This joint-funding opportunity is available to the following programs: Impact Awards, Impact: ELSI & HE stream, Accelerating Clinical Translation Awards, Early Career Researcher Jump Start Awards, and Clinical Trial Awards.
2. Type 1 diabetes in collaboration with Breakthrough T1D, in conjunction with their Canadian affiliate, JDRF Canada. This joint-funding opportunity is available to the following programs: Impact Awards, Impact: ELSI & HE Stream, Accelerating Clinical Translation Awards, Fueling Biotechnology Partnerships Awards, and Clinical Trial Awards.
3. Commercialization of regenerative medicine in collaboration with CQDM. This joint-funding opportunity is available exclusively to the Fueling Biotechnology Partnerships Awards and is only open to applicants affiliated with institutions in Québec.

Please consult the Joint-Funding Guidelines for each collaborating organization to ensure your project focus aligns with the opportunity.



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WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR THE JOINT-FUNDING AWARD OPPORTUNITIES?

Joint-funded awards with the Azrieli Foundation and Breakthrough TD1 are open nationally to lead applicants. Joint-funded awards through CQDM are only open to Quebec-based lead applicants who are partnering with a Quebec-based Biotech SME.

HOW CAN RESEARCHERS APPLY FOR JOINT-FUNDED AWARDS?

Applicants to SCN funding programs must submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) and indicate they are applying for a joint-funded award. A full application through ProposalCentral is required for applicants that pass the LOI stage.

HOW WILL THE JOINT-FUNDED AWARDS APPLICATIONS BE EVALUATED FOR ELIGIBILITY AND REVIEWED?

All applications for joint funded awards must provide a written justification statement at the LOI stage, that describes how the proposed project aligns with the joint-funding opportunity. This statement will be used by SCN and the relevant joint-funding award organization to assess eligibility for the opportunity and the progression of an LOI to full application. Applications found to be non-eligible for a joint-funding award will be considered for SCN's standard awards. Full applications for joint-funded awards will be subject to [SCN's two-stage peer review process](#).

WHAT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IS REQUIRED FOR A JOINT FUNDED AWARDS APPLICATION?

Applications will be accepted using the same application forms as standard SCN awards, with two notable differences: (1) Applicants are asked to provide a written justification statement at the LOI stage that describes how the proposed project aligns with the joint-funding opportunity. (2) In the budget section of the full application, all costs are split evenly (50:50) between SCN and the joint-funding organization (Azrieli Foundation or Breakthrough T1D). For the CQDM joint-funding award, costs are split 40:40:20 between SCN, CQDM and the Industry Partner, respectively

ARE THERE SPECIAL POST-AWARD REQUIREMENTS FOR THE JOINT-FUNDING PARTNER AWARDS?

For successful applications, SCN and the joint-funding partner will create separate funding agreements with each investigator's institutions. Jointly funded awards have the same continual review reporting requirements as standard SCN awards. In addition to



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submitting progress reports, lead investigators of SCN-Breakthrough T1D awards will be required to meet virtually with Breakthrough T1D once each year to discuss the overall project.