



Weston Family Foundation

FAQs

Brain Health: 2021 - Lifestyle Approaches and Microbiome Contributions

DEFINITIONS

In general, what is the Weston Family Foundation seeking to support with this program?

In this program, the Weston Family Foundation wishes to support research and implementation initiatives that aim to improve Canadians' maintenance of optimal brain structure and function starting in midlife and, concomitantly, reduce the incidence and progression of neurodegenerative diseases of aging, including Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease.

How does the Weston Family Foundation define lifestyle approaches?

Lifestyle approaches refer to the behaviours and practices that can be modified by individuals themselves so as to maintain optimal brain health and reduce the incidence and progression of neurodegenerative diseases of aging.

How does the Weston Family Foundation define microbiome contributions?

In this axis of the program, we seek to support research that examines the contributions of the human microbiome (e.g., nasal, oral, gut, skin) to the maintenance of optimal brain health as well as to the incidence and progression of neurodegenerative diseases. More information is provided below.

How is this program different from other Weston Brain Institute and Weston Family Foundation programs?

This program represents the first funding opportunity offered by the Weston Family Foundation that supports projects seeking to examine the link between lifestyle approaches and the prevention of neurodegenerative diseases of aging. It is also the first initiative offered jointly by the Weston Brain Institute and Weston Family Microbiome Initiative; although not necessary, projects that evaluate the impact of lifestyle approaches on both the microbiome and brain are of particular interest.

Much of the other funding programs offered by our organization support translational research seeking to advance therapeutic strategies for the intervention of neurodegenerative diseases of aging. Moreover, the Weston Family Foundation has traditionally not provided material support for projects seeking to investigate

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implementation approaches.

SCOPE

What type of research evaluating the microbial contributions to brain health are eligible for funding?

Non-clinical and clinical research projects that contribute to the understanding of microbial influences on brain health are eligible for funding, including those that demonstrate impact on health and/or assess molecular and cellular mechanisms that contribute to brain health.

What is not in scope for this program?

Projects that are ineligible for funding include those that do not directly investigate a lifestyle approach (as defined above), as well as those that seek to study the impact of lifestyle approaches or microbial contributions toward the attenuation of diseases other than neurodegenerative diseases of aging.

Projects that are focused on patient-centered care, in which patients are not empowered to make a lifestyle change on their own, are also out of scope for this program. For example, implementation of best practices for patient care or providing support to caregivers are not in scope for this funding opportunity, even if it may serve to improve Canadians' brain health.

What types of projects are eligible for funding under this program?

Eligible projects can be research questions or implementation initiatives that, if successful, will have a measurable impact on brain health.

Research questions are defined as hypothesis-based queries that help to accelerate the development of lifestyle approaches or microbiome contributions to brain health, and may include the:

- Investigation of the impact of lifestyle approaches, such as diet, exercise, social engagement and adequate therapeutic control of contributing diseases and syndromes; and/or,
- Elucidation of novel pathways or mechanisms by which the microbiome affects brain health, or of potential therapeutic strategies whereby the microbiome can be

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manipulated as a means to maintain optimal brain health or prevent neurodegenerative diseases of aging.

Examples of implementation initiatives include studies that:

- Seek to clarify the optimal method of delivery of lifestyle approaches to maintain optimal brain health and prevent disease; and/or,
- Evaluate the translation of findings into routine clinical practice.

Regardless of hypothesis and design, all projects must include a direct, validated assessment of brain health, whether this be a biomarker, cognitive assessment, *etc.* Projects need not be clinical in nature, however; we welcome proposals seeking to examine the impact of lifestyle approaches on – and microbiome contributions to – the maintenance of optimal brain health that employ animal models.

LOGISTICS

How much funding is available, and for what length of time?

Up to CAD\$1.5M of funding is available per project, which can last up to 36 months (although, note that exceptions on project length may be available on a case-by-case basis.)

For projects seeking to study a lifestyle approach, an additional CAD\$100,000 (maximum) per project may be available to enable collection and analyses of microbiome samples.

What if my envisioned research project requires more funding or time than is available through this program?

In some cases the Foundation may agree to extend the term of a project funded under this program to greater than 36 months.

Projects that are particularly successful may qualify for follow-on funding.

How many projects does the Weston Family Foundation seek to fund under this program?

In our inaugural competition (2021), we are seeking to fund a minimum of four projects.

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Who is eligible for funding under this program?

The Weston Family Foundation only provides grants to not-for-profit and charitable organizations that are registered with the Canada Revenue Agency.

Principal applicants submitting an application must identify as a researcher working in Canada at least 30% of the time and hold a position at-or-above the level of assistant professor or equivalent.

Co-applicants and collaborators must be at the post-doctoral level or above, and can be working outside Canada.

What is the process for applying to this program?

The application process consists of two stages: letters of intent (LOI) submission and review, followed by the invitation and review of full proposals.

More specifically, to initiate the funding request process, applicants must first submit a LOI to the Weston Family Foundation. Following a scientific review by a panel of international experts, selected applicants will then be invited to submit a full proposal. As with the LOIs, full proposals will be adjudicated by an external scientific review committee prior to be approved for funding.

Applications should be submitted on our online grants management site, and can be submitted by [following this link](#). Program details and an example of an LOI can be found on the [program webpage](#).

How is the Weston Family Foundation administering this program?

This program is administered jointly by two divisions of the Weston Family Foundation: the Weston Family Microbiome Initiative and Weston Brain Institute.

What are relevant deadlines for this program?

Online applications open: August 5, 2020

LOI deadline: November 25, 2020

Proposal deadline: April 15, 2021

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Anticipated award
notification:

July 2021

Whom should I contact at the Weston Family Foundation if I have questions?

The Foundation welcomes additional inquiries about this program, including whether a potential idea is in scope.

Please email brainhealth@westonfoundation.ca or call 416-967-7822 should you have any questions or require additional information.

For more generic information on grant policies, please click [here](#) or [here](#).