

Achievements for Ann – The Backlund Fellowship

Competition Guidelines

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Overview

[Campus Alberta Neuroscience \(CAN\)](#), in partnership with [The ALS Society of Alberta](#) is pleased to announce the launch of the Achievements for Ann – The Backlund Fellowship Competition, focused on supporting research that works to better understand the cause of ALS, find potential treatments, or otherwise improve the quality of life for those living with ALS and similar neuromuscular disorders.

Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects motor neurons in the brain and spinal cord. The disease causes muscle weakness and loss of muscle control, ultimately progressing to paralysis where an individual is left unable to eat or breathe. In most cases, ALS results in premature death in a number of years. With approximately 3,000 Canadians currently living with ALS and no known treatment or cure, investing in research in this field is paramount. By exploring research to understand the causes, find potential treatments, or enhance the quality of life for those affected, the ALS Society of Alberta Postdoctoral Scholars will play a crucial role in combating these neurodegenerative diseases.

The financial support of the Achievements for Ann – The Backlund Fellowship will allow its recipients to focus on novel, innovative research explorations without worrying about financial constraints. This investment into research in Alberta will accelerate the translation of scientific knowledge into practical, evidence-based applications in healthcare, policy, and everyday life. It will also create new opportunities for mentorship, training, and collaboration, which strengthens researchers' expertise and nurtures a culture of lifelong learning and open knowledge sharing in Alberta.

Competition Scope

The scope of this competition describes the eligible research area(s) in which The ALS Society of Alberta and CAN are looking to support Postdoctoral Scholars. This scope is defined broadly and is intended to encourage applications from a diverse array of disciplines and experiences to support projects and scholars with strong potential that align with the ALS Society of Alberta's mission, *"to make each day the best possible day for people living with and affected by ALS."*

Eligible research projects must be based on a research question or objective that aims to create a positive impact in the fields of ALS and neuromuscular disorders. This can include projects that fall under any of the following four research themes that are in alignment with those outlined by CIHR: **biomedical research; clinical research; health services research; and social, cultural, environmental, and population health research.**

Eligible research projects are not limited to any specific faculty or discipline, and multidisciplinary approaches are encouraged.

Key Dates

Call Announced:	March 20, 2024
Notice of Intent Deadline:	11:59 PM MST on June 7, 2024
Application Deadline:	11:59 PM MST on August 16, 2024

Award Notifications: January 2025 (tentative)

Funding and Award Period

The ALS Society of Alberta, in partnership with CAN, will provide two (2) awards of up to CAD **\$140,000 total funding per award** for a period of two years each. Funding terms will start in January 2025 at the earliest. Funding terms must begin within 11 months following the application deadline.

Supervisors must agree to provide top-up support for successful Applicants of at least CAD \$10,000 plus benefits. Funding may be used only as salary for the awarded Postdoctoral Scholar and may not be used for benefits, WCB, or other non-salary expenses.

Eligibility

Applicant

- Canadian citizenship is not a requirement, but the Applicant must be affiliated with a degree-granting research institution in Alberta for the term of this award.
- At the start of the funding term, the Applicant must have five or fewer years of full-time training after completing a doctoral degree. Applicants may be currently working toward a PhD at the time of the application submission, but must have obtained the degree before funding commences.
- The Applicant must identify a research Supervisor according to the criteria below.
- Over the term of this award, the Applicant must demonstrate a significant contribution to the proposed research project in the fields of ALS and neuromuscular disorders and spend at least 60% of the funding term conducting research.
- The Applicant must be able to comply with the Terms and Conditions of the award, as outlined below.

Supervisor

- The Supervisor must conduct research in the fields of ALS and neuromuscular disorders, with preference given to those currently working in collaboration with an ALS Clinic in Alberta.
- The Supervisor must hold a full-time faculty position at a degree-granting institution in Alberta, including the University of Alberta, Calgary, or Lethbridge.
- The Supervisor can only supervise one Postdoctoral Fellowship awarded from this competition, i.e., a Supervisor can only be associated with a single Applicant.

Research Project

- The proposed research project must have a research question or objectives directly related to ALS and/or neuromuscular disorders.
- The proposed project must be conducted within Alberta with the intent of being conducted in affiliation with one of the ALS Clinics in Alberta.

- Higher priority will be given to projects which:
 - are multidisciplinary, have meaningful involvement of knowledge users, or are otherwise committed to a collaborative approach to research, as applicable
 - ethically and sensitively integrate considerations for SGBA+ (sex- and gender-based analysis plus), EDI (equity, diversity, and inclusion), and involvement of Indigenous Peoples, as applicable
 - are committed to knowledge translation of research results and findings, via education, publication, commercialization, etc. See below for more information on Knowledge Translation as it pertains to this competition.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

CAN and The ALS Society of Alberta recognize the importance of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in enriching the process and outcome of collaborative scientific inquiry and innovation. We encourage applicants of diverse backgrounds to apply to this funding opportunity, which will promote the expression of diverse perspectives, approaches, and experiences, including those of underrepresented and disadvantaged groups.

How to Apply

Applications for this competition will be accepted through an online submission portal. **Applications and supporting letters must be received in full before August 16, 2024.** Descriptions of the application requirements are provided here as reference only to allow the Applicant to prepare the necessary documents prior to submission of their application. It is imperative that the application content is proofread before submission; changes to the application after the deadline are not allowed. Only a single copy of the application will be accepted. Letters from Supervisors and referees will only be accepted directly via the online submission portal.

Late or incomplete applications will not be considered for funding. It is the sole responsibility of the Applicant to ensure the application submission adheres to all requirements and is received, including supporting letters, before the deadline.

Note: By submitting this application, Applicants acknowledge that their information will be shared with a review committee for evaluation. CAN and The ALS Society of Alberta reserve the right to disclose non-confidential lay summaries with partner organizations and their donors for the sole purpose of being considered for additional funding and support opportunities. Applicants in consideration will be contacted before further information is shared. In addition, information regarding applications may be shared with donors to inform them about the distribution of their valuable contributions to the advancement of research in Alberta. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the sharing of applicant or project information, please contact abneuro@ucalgary.ca for further guidance.

Applicant Information

This application will require identifying information from the Applicant, such as name and email address. The only information we may use to identify you is the information you give voluntarily. Personal information is disclosed only to the authorized personnel who will use it solely for the functions outlined in these Program Guidelines. The Applicant will be asked to provide a Canadian Common CV (CCV) in Biosketch format. As this is a Postdoctoral Fellowship award, the Applicant must provide the date they received (or will receive) their PhD. The Applicant will also be asked to outline their most relevant experience, top examples of achievements or contributions to the research community, and explain any gaps in their career progress. This information will be used to evaluate the quality and potential of the Applicant as a Postdoctoral Scholar as part of the application review criteria, which may include:

- research history, employment, and other relevant experience
- academic history and achievements
- contributions to the research community
- leadership excellence and potential

Supervisor Information

The application will require the name and contact information for the proposed Primary Supervisor and the names of any co-supervisors. The CCV of the Supervisor and co-supervisors in Biosketch format will be required, as applicable. As outlined above, information provided is disclosed only to the authorized personnel who will use it solely for the functions outlined in these Program Guidelines.

A letter from the Supervisor will be required, which must provide:

- a list of postdoctoral scholars in their associated program and the current source of their funding
- a list of the Supervisor's currently funded grants (if not in CCV)
- verification of the Supervisor's affiliation with an ALS Clinic in Alberta, if applicable
- confirmation of commitment by the Supervisor to provide top-up support for the Applicant (\$10,000 plus benefits), if the application is successful
- an outline of professional development and growth opportunities available for the Applicant at the host institution
- a brief outline of how the research environment (tools and facilities, available expertise, Supervisor's own investigations) will contribute to and synchronize with the Applicant's proposed research project

This information will be used to evaluate the quality of support that the Applicant will receive from the proposed Supervisor and research environment as part of the application review criteria, which may include:

- Supervisor's expertise and relevance to Applicant's proposed research project
- opportunities for professional development and growth
- appropriateness of the research environment for the proposed research project

Research Project

The Applicant will be asked to provide information about their proposed research project, including:

- a clear and concise, non-confidential lay summary that explains the necessary background information, project description/goals, and potential outcomes in language that can be understood by non-expert audiences (half page)
- a one-page scientific summary of the project, including research question/objectives, general estimated timeline, approach and methodology, potential risks/barriers and how they will be addressed, and potential outcomes; citations and bibliography should be included as appropriate (bibliography will not count toward the page limit)
- specific details on how key indicators for this competition are being addressed, if applicable, or explanations of why they are not applicable, including:
 - commitment to collaboration: multidisciplinary teams/approaches; collaboration across university campuses; meaningful involvement of knowledge users; etc.
 - meaningful and appropriate consideration for SGBA+, EDI, and involvement of Indigenous Peoples
 - commitment to knowledge translation of research results and findings via education, publication, clinical or policy implementation, commercialization, etc.
 - relevance to The ALS Society of Alberta's mission, "to make each day the best possible day for people living with and affected by ALS"

This information will be used to evaluate the quality and potential impact of the research project and consideration for the key indicators.

Letters of Recommendation

This application requires the Applicant to identify two individuals (referees) who can provide letters of recommendation. It is suggested that the Applicant choose referees who can speak directly to their academic and research strengths, abilities, and achievements (current and past supervisors are recommended). Letters should focus on these areas, but may additionally address the quality and potential of the proposed research project and the Applicant's potential for professional development and career growth.

Letters of Recommendation should be submitted with the Full Application, but may be emailed to CAN (abneuro@ucalgary.ca) directly from the referee.

Review Process

All eligible and completed applications will undergo peer review by individuals from institutions outside of Alberta with expertise in basic, clinical, and quality of life research capacities as related to the Competition Scope. Any Conflict of Interest will be taken into consideration when assigning reviewers.

By submitting this application, Applicants acknowledge that it is not possible to completely remove identifying information from applications undergoing review and that reviewers will have access to Applicant and Supervisor CVs for the purposes of evaluation. Reviewers will be required to sign confidentiality agreements prior to accessing application information.

Applications will be evaluated on the basis of merit of the applicant and supervision team, quality of the research project and environment, and relevance to the goals of the ALS Society of Alberta. Specifically, applications will be evaluated based on:

- Academic qualifications, research experience, and leadership potential of the Applicant
- Supervisor's expertise and relevance to the Applicant's proposed research project
- Applicant "fit" for the program
- Feasibility of the proposed research project
- Innovativeness and potential impact of the proposed research project
- Appropriateness of the research environment for the proposed research, including access to expertise, tools, and connections required to successfully carry out the project as well as opportunities and plans for the Applicant's professional development and growth
- Letters of recommendation

Special consideration will be given to projects which:

- are novel or involve a novel collaboration, i.e. not a continuation of an existing project.
- are multidisciplinary, have meaningful involvement of knowledge users, or are otherwise committed to a collaborative approach to research, as applicable.
- ethically and sensitively integrate consideration for diversity and traditionally underrepresented groups, including principles of SGBA+ (sex- and gender-based analysis plus), EDI (equity, diversity, and inclusion), and/or framework for respectful involvement of Indigenous Peoples, as applicable.
- are committed to knowledge translation of research results and findings, via education, publication, clinical or policy implementation, commercialization, etc.

Reviewers will evaluate applications using a scoring system. Applications with scores falling within the fundable range will be discussed at the review committee meeting. The review committee and CAN will submit recommendations for funding to The ALS Society of Alberta. Funding decisions will be based on the review committee evaluations and availability of funds for the competition. The ALS Society of Alberta and CAN will not enter discussion on specific items in the review process or reasons for the rejection of applications. **All decisions are final and cannot be appealed.**

Innovative research, for the purposes of this award, is defined as research that expands the boundaries of what is currently understood as having a positive impact in the field of neuroscience research. Projects should think "outside of the box" and bring disciplines together in unexpected ways to form bold, innovative perspectives. It is important to note that many important research questions can be addressed with existing technologies and methodologies, but for the purposes of this award, it is the innovativeness in application of these technologies and methodologies that is important.

Applicants selected for funding will be notified in writing in Winter 2024 (date is tentative and subject to change) and at that time will be required to accept the terms and conditions of the award. It is the sole responsibility of the Applicant to ensure that CAN and The ALS Society of Alberta are provided with current contact information and to notify of any changes to the contact information provided in the original application.

Payment of Funds

Funds will be paid directly to awardees by The ALS Society of Alberta on a monthly basis, pending the submission of an annual report, as outlined in the Terms and Conditions. In the event that an annual report is not provided to CAN, funding for the second year may be revoked.

Should an awardee be unable to continue the research project for any reason for which they are receiving support, CAN should be notified immediately, and provisions be made for the cancellation of monthly award payments.

Recipients requesting a leave of absence from the research environment for longer than three (3) weeks must provide a written statement explaining the reason for their request at least three (3) months before their anticipated date of leave. Requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis. A timeline of when they expect to resume their project and a related work plan is also required. Funding will be suspended for the duration of the leave and shall recommence when, and if, the awardee returns to their research environment and provides a letter of verification from their Supervisor to CAN and The ALS Society of Alberta.

Terms and Conditions

Acceptance of Award

Successful Applicants must accept the offer within ten (10) business days of receiving a notice of award from CAN. A funding acceptance form will be provided with the notice of award and must be returned with supporting documentation to CAN by email, signed by both the successful Applicant and their Supervisor, within this timeframe. Any potential funding conditions or required clarifications and their related timelines will be outlined with the offer. Failure to comply with this requirement may lead to withdrawal of the offer.

Note: By accepting this award, CAN and The ALS Society of Alberta reserve the right to disclose any application information with partner organizations and their donors for the sole purpose of being considered for additional funding and support opportunities. In addition, information regarding applications may be shared with donors to provide them with information about the distribution of their valuable contributions to the advancement of research in Alberta. Finally, CAN reserves the right to share information such as applicant name, project title, and non-confidential lay research summary publicly on our website and social media. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the sharing of applicant or project information, please contact abneuro@ucalgary.ca for further guidance.

Funding and Award Period

Successful Applicants will be provided with funding of up to CAD \$140,000 over a period of two years. Payment of funds is dependent on compliance with program requirements and deliverables. Supervisors are required to provide top-up support for successful Applicants of at least CAD \$10,000 plus benefits.

Funding may be used only as salary for the awarded Postdoctoral Scholar and may not be used for benefits, WCB, or other non-salary expenses.

Successful Applicants must provide verification of the start date of their postdoctoral term. Funding will commence on the verified term start date, provided it occurs no later than 11 months after the application deadline. If the term start date is prior to January 2025, funding will commence on January 1, 2025. It is the responsibility of the Applicant and Supervisor to ensure that the postdoctoral term starts within the required timeframe. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in loss of funding.

Onboarding of the successful Applicant and any other postdoctoral, research, or employment requirements from the host institution will be the sole responsibility of the Supervisor.

Documentation Requirements

All successful Applicants, on acceptance of funding, are required to submit:

- verification of postdoctoral term start date with the host institution
- a letter from the Supervisor's affiliated ALS Clinic, confirming the Clinic's intent to work with the successful Applicant moving forward
- all applicable ethics certifications and approvals or proof that they will be in place before research commences

Additionally, as a condition of this award, successful Applicants are required to submit an annual report, 12 months from the postdoctoral term start date, that includes:

- confirmation that no major revisions to the research proposal have occurred
- update on the progress of the research, including objectives achieved
- confirmation that all ethics certifications and other required research approvals are current and up-to-date
- signature from the Supervisor as verification that the contents of the report are accurate

In the event that this report is not provided to CAN, funding may be revoked.

Within six (6) months following the end of the funding period, Applicants must submit a final report to CAN that includes:

- an outline of results or findings
- any publications, in peer reviewed journals or in press, that resulted from the funding
- an outline of any intellectual property, including patents, and any services or products/technologies produced related to the funding
- a letter from the Supervisor outlining the Applicant's professional development and career growth over the funding term

The annual and final reports will be consolidated and shared with The ALS Society of Alberta. Reporting templates will be provided to successful Applicants. An important component of the annual and final reports is the lay summary. These summaries may appear on CAN and The ALS Society of Alberta websites and be shared with relevant stakeholders and partners. CAN and The ALS Society of Alberta



reserve the right to make editorial amendments to summaries which will be returned to the awardee for review prior to dissemination.

Knowledge Translation and Open Access

Knowledge translation, science education, and public engagement are key goals for CAN and The ALS Society of Alberta. Therefore, awardees may be asked to attend and/or participate in events and media to showcase the importance of research in the field of ALS, provide education to both academic and lay audiences, and demonstrate the quality of research being done in the province of Alberta.

Related to these goals, CAN and The ALS Society of Alberta require award recipients to ensure research outputs are available as Open Access resources. Open Access means that research outputs, particularly publications and data, are free, publicly accessible, and generally available online. Open Access also includes the right to use these research outputs, with little or no restriction, in the digital environment. By adhering to Open Access practices, researchers can share their work on a wider scale and increase the potential impact, and funded research is made more accessible to everyone.

The financial support of [The ALS Society of Alberta](#) and [Campus Alberta Neuroscience](#) must be acknowledged in all publications, releases, presentations, and scientific communications pertinent to the research project.

Questions

If you are interested in applying to this program and require further information, please contact Campus Alberta Neuroscience at abneuro@ucalgary.ca with the subject line "ALS Society of Alberta Postdoctoral Fellowship Competition".

Applicants are encouraged to attend scheduled **Q&A webinars** to learn more about the Postdoctoral Fellowship Competition requirements, competition scope, and the overall application process. Please visit our website (albertaneuro.ca) or Twitter ([@abneurosci](https://twitter.com/abneurosci)) for more information on the upcoming webinar dates.

About the Funders



The ALS Society of Alberta

The ALS Society of Alberta is a non-profit organization dedicated to making each day the best possible day for people living with and affected by Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS). It is the only non-profit organization in Alberta that provides support to those affected by the disease, and also supports the national ALS research program.



CAN

Campus Alberta Neuroscience, established in 2012 with support from the Government of Alberta, is a province-wide neuroscience network connecting the Universities of Alberta, Calgary and Lethbridge to increase the impact of neuroscience and mental health research, education and translation, developing the province as an epicenter for neuroscience excellence. Through collaborative partnerships with researchers, government and health system stakeholders, industry and community organizations, CAN supports and accelerates innovative brain and mental health advances that improve brain health, patient care and quality of life in Alberta and beyond. For more information, please visit albertaneuro.ca.