

# Société Alzheimer Society

## Alzheimer Society Research Program (ASRP) 2023-2024 Proof of Concept Letter of Intent (LOI) Application Guidelines

**Application deadline:**

**July 17th, 2023, 5:00 p.m. (EDT)**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Alzheimer Society Research Program (ASRP) is a successful collaborative initiative of our Federation, within which all the provincial Alzheimer Societies, the Alzheimer Society of Canada (ASC), partners and donors pull together to support research directed at both eradicating dementia and ameliorating the lives of those affected by it.

The ASRP provides grants and awards to support Canadian studies that promise new insights into causes, prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and management of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. One of these grants is the **Proof of Concept Grant**.

- **Proof of Concept Grants** are designed to fund innovative, high-risk, and high-reward research that pushes beyond the boundaries of our existing understanding of dementia, including but not limited to mechanisms, prevention, treatment, care, program and policy. We are looking for bold and challenging new directions in dementia research that have the potential to lead to ground-breaking findings.

Researchers interested in submitting a Proof of Concept Grant application must first submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) to be pre-screened.

This set of guidelines is specific to the **Proof of Concept LOI application process ONLY**. Guidelines for the full ASRP 2023-2024 competition, set to launch September 8, 2023, will be released closer to the launch date. The ASRP Guidelines from the 2022-2023 competition, for reference, are available through the following link: [2022-2023 ASRP Guidelines English](#)

**The ASRP supports an open competition.** With an aim to support research that will improve the lives of those with lived experience, the ASRP invites applicants from **all disciplines** to apply. Eligible proposals may be cross-cutting or interdisciplinary in nature.

### 1.1 Conflict of Interest

The ASRP and all documents and information provided for the purpose of peer review are subject to the conditions of the Privacy Act and Access to Information Act. All information contained in applications, internal and external reviews and panel discussions is highly sensitive. As such, all Panel Members (Peer Reviewers, Citizen Reviewers and Relevancy Reviewers), Alzheimer Society Staff and Observers will not discuss with applicants or reviewers any information relating to the review of a specific application. Therefore, the applications and any discussions thereof are treated as strictly confidential and may not be used for any purpose beyond that for which they were originally intended. All materials related to the review process are stored in a secure manner to prevent unauthorized access. They are transmitted using secure carriers and technologies. When they are no longer required, paper documents must be destroyed using a secure method such as shredding or returned to ASC for destruction, and electronic documents must be deleted.

As such, the ASRP makes every effort to ensure, not only that decisions are fair and objective, but also that they are seen to be so. Individual panel members are asked to avoid any actions that might give the appearance that a **conflict of interest** exists or could reasonably be viewed as affecting their objectivity. When a reviewer is uncertain as to whether a conflict exists, he/she informs ASC of the potential conflict and ASC will make the final decision as to whether they may appropriately review certain ASRP applications.

The ASRP follows the direction of the [Tri-Agency's Responsible Conduct of Research](#), which describes the policies and requirements for applying for research funding, managing funds, conducting research, and

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disseminating results. ASC implements rigid assessments of **conflict of interest** amongst its peer reviewers, donors, and external reviewers in order to eliminate any potential risks that would pose a threat to the integrity of the research, the researcher or the Alzheimer Society and its affiliated partners. **Conflicts of Interest** may arise when a stakeholder's interests and intent towards an area of research intersects with any personal, commercial, financial interest or benefit pertaining to the individual, their employment, or partnerships and former or prospective professional associations. Conflicts may also arise when activities or situations places an individual—such as a researcher—in a real, potential, or perceived conflict between the duties or responsibilities related to research and personal, institutional, or other interests.

## 2. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Grants and awards are intended to support researchers based in a Canadian university or affiliated institution and are not provided to support research sponsored by for-profit organizations. The geographic requirement may be waived for grants/awards funded through a partnership agreement with an organization based outside of Canada.

### 2.1 Submission Procedure

The ASRP does not accept applications and supporting documents via mail or email. All applications (LOI and full application submissions) and supporting documents must be submitted online through ASC's SurveyMonkey Apply portal (English: [asc.smapply.ca](https://asc.smapply.ca) / French: [asc.smapply.ca/lang/?lang=fr](https://asc.smapply.ca/lang/?lang=fr)). **All Proof of Concept LOI applications must be submitted by July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023 5:00 PM EDT.** Incomplete LOI applications will not be processed.

### 2.2 Review Criteria and Process

Proof of Concept LOI applications are reviewed by a panel of experts in the field of dementia through a pre-screen peer review process. Proof of Concept LOI applications are evaluated based on scientific merit and novelty.

Pre-screen peer review comments will be provided to LOI applicants following the panel meetings. Only those applications deemed to be truly Proof of Concept will be invited to submit a full proposal in September 2023. ASC will not enter into discussion on specific items in the reviews provided to applicants on reasons for the rejection of applications. ASC makes every effort to ensure the confidentiality of each application.

### 2.3 Notifications

Official notification of the pre-screen Proof of Concept LOI results is provided in the Summer of 2023. These results are transmitted to the applicants electronically via email. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that ASC is provided with a current email address and to notify the ASC Research Department of any updates that need to be made to the contact information provided in the LOI application. Applicants invited to submit a full proposal following the pre-screen of their LOI must notify ASC electronically of their intention to submit within ten (10) business days of their receiving the result of their LOI application electronically.

### 2.4 Co-Investigators and Collaborators

In accordance with the definitions provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and in line with the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), a co-investigator is defined as an individual—participating in a grant application—who makes a significant contribution to the intellectual direction of the research or research-related activity, who plays a significant role in the conduct of the research or research-related activity, and who may also have some responsibility for financial aspects of the research. A collaborator

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is an individual—participating in a grant application—who may make a significant contribution to the intellectual direction of the research or research-related activity and who may play a significant role in the conduct of the research or research-related activity.

## 2.5 Host Institution/Location of Research

The host institution must take full responsibility for the conduct of the research being funded, in accordance with all ASRP policies. These include maintaining integrity in research and scholarship, full ethical review and surveillance, compliance with accepted biohazard and animal care regulations, and full financial accounting and control.

## 2.6 Ethics and Safety Certificates

Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) is at the cornerstone of the ASRP's commitment to excellence in dementia research. As such, the ASRP is committed to the [Tri-Agency Framework for Responsible Conduct of Research](#). The ASC, in its administration of the ASRP, follows this framework's policies and requirements in the management of its funds, research performance and dissemination of research results.

***If invited to submit a full application***, the applicant, the President (or Principal of Institution), the Head of the Department, and the Dean of Faculty (or Director of Institution) must sign a statement indicating that the proposal will be reviewed by the appropriate ethical review committee prior to the commencement of the project. Funds will not be released until ASC has received copies of all necessary ethical and safety certificates.

In the case of animal experimentation, lab procedures must be consistent with the Guiding Principles enunciated by the Canadian Council on Animal Care.

In cases of human research, the proposed research must be reviewed in a manner which conforms to the guidelines as outlined by the Tri-Council Policy Statement, "Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans."

When observations are being made on behaviour or lifestyle of patients either in the home or institutions and/or information is being requested of caregivers or health professionals involved, the applicant must indicate within the proposal that issues of privacy and confidentiality will be discussed with these individuals and that written agreement will be obtained.

Where biological and chemical hazards are involved, documentation must be provided demonstrating that the procedures meet the requirements as outlined in Health Canada's Laboratory Biosafety Guidelines.

## 2.7 Intellectual Property

ASC and, where applicable, ASRP partners, do not wish to own or have a vested interest in intellectual property which may emanate from any of the research projects it is supporting. Neither does ASC wish to dictate terms to host institutions as to how they handle intellectual property. ASC does, however, insist that the host institution have a clear policy regarding intellectual property and that such policy be in force at the time any grant/award is made. ASRP-funded research is intended to contribute to the development of knowledge related to Alzheimer's disease and other dementias rather than the promotion of commercial interests.

## 3. Proof of Concept Grant - Letter of Intent

### 3.1 Eligibility Requirements

The Proof-of-Concept Grants program will favour those applications that focus on **challenging new directions** in research into Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. The Proof-of-Concept Grant will support investigators with innovative, high-risk, and high-yield explorations into dementia research. **The maximum amount awarded is \$100,000; the grant can be held for a maximum of three (3) years.**

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The principal investigator (*and any co-investigators*) on a research grant must be based in Canada or be an independent researcher (i.e., professor, associate professor, assistant professor, and professor emeritus) with a Canadian university or affiliated institution (i.e., Teaching hospital). A researcher based outside of Canada would be eligible as a co-investigator only if his/her participation in the project occurred entirely in a Canadian university or affiliated institution.

Principal investigators must hold a position equivalent to the rank of Assistant Professor or higher in a Canadian research-intensive University. Adjunct professors at or above the level of Assistant Professor are eligible to apply. Each grant application must designate a principal investigator, who will be the administrative contact for the grant, should the grant be awarded.

Applicants cannot apply for more than **one** grant in total per competition, regardless of their role (e.g., individuals cannot submit one application as the principal investigator and another application as a co-investigator). However, applicants can be listed as collaborators on multiple applications.

Doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows are not eligible to apply as principal investigators for research grants and cannot be listed as co-investigators. All co-investigators must meet the same eligibility criteria as that required for a principal investigator.

**Proof of Concept Grants are pre-screened** through a LOI process to ensure they meet this grant application's requirements/eligibility. Only those applications that are deemed to be truly *Proof of Concept* (as defined above) will be asked to submit a full application for peer review and review amongst citizen reviewers. Proof of Concept requirements are also provided in full within the LOI process form on Survey Monkey Apply (English: [asc.smapply.ca](https://asc.smapply.ca) / French: [asc.smapply.ca/lang/?lang=fr](https://asc.smapply.ca/lang/?lang=fr)).

## 3.2 Guiding Principles

The Proof-of-Concept Grants program is looking to support those applications that observe the following guiding principles:

- (a) Applications must propose **novel** research questions that challenge the *status quo* in research, practice, and/or policy into Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.
- (b) Established dementia researchers, interdisciplinary teams, and researchers outside the field of Alzheimer's disease and dementia who are proposing novel research that is clearly relevant to Alzheimer's disease and related dementias are all encouraged to apply.
- (c) While preliminary data are always helpful in determining the validity of any test hypothesis, the Proof of Concept grants program may also fund research that is at the earlier stage of conception (little preliminary data if at all, or potentially unorthodox research rationale or approach).

## 3.3 Key Dates

The ASRP's focus on funding innovation and excellence in Canadian dementia research is supported by the Proof of Concept grant program. We encourage researchers from diverse backgrounds to submit a LOI for a Proof of Concept application if they wish to propose a novel, high risk, and challenging hypothesis or research question. The LOI form is open to Proof of Concept applicants on **June 7, 2023** via SurveyMonkey Apply. The submission of LOIs is due **July 17, 2023**.

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A pre-screen review process of Proof of Concept LOI submissions will take place in August 2023. Proof of Concept applicants who have passed the pre-screen review process will be notified before the end of August 2023. Those applicants will then be invited to submit a full ASRP Proof of Concept Grant application when the competition launches on September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

## **4. CONTACT INFORMATION**

Enquiries relating to the ASRP should be directed to:

*Research Department*

Alzheimer Society of Canada

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Toronto, ON M4R 1K8

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