Rapid Response 2026: Biomarkers Program
Frequently Asked Questions

This FAQ aims to address common inquiries related to the Rapid Response 2026: Biomarkers program. However, we encourage you to refer to the Program Details document for more in-depth information. If you have any project specific questions (e.g., whether an idea is in-scope), please contact us directly via email.

General

Who is the Foundation's main contact for the program?

Applicants who have questions about the program or wish to discuss specific project details can send their inquiries to info@westonbrain.org.

What are the key dates for this program?

- Program information session 1: February 3, 2026, at 1pm ET
- Program information session 2: February 17, 2026, at 1pm ET
- Letter of Intent deadline: March 17, 2026, at 2pm ET
- Proposal deadline: August 4, 2026, at 2pm ET
- Award announcement: November 2026

** Proposal deadline is only relevant should the application progress through the letter of intent phase of the program.*

When should projects begin?

A reasonable project start date is 1-2 months after the award notification.

Scope

Is the use of animal models in scope for this program?

No. This program focuses on biomarker validation to clinical implementation, with projects required to be at the analytical validation stage or later. As such, animal models are not in scope for this program. Projects should therefore be conducted using human participants and/or human samples to support the advancement of the biomarker toward clinical use.

Do projects need to be at a specific stage in the biomarker development path to be in

scope?

Projects need to be translational/applied research that enable the development of a biomarker from the analytical validation stage onward. Proposals covering only the discovery and early development of biomarkers will not be considered. For more information, please refer to *Section 1: Project Scope* of the Program Details document.

How do you define the phases of biomarker development?

Each phase of the biomarker development path should address a specific outcome to move the biomarker toward real-world impact. The Foundation defines the phases of biomarker development eligible for this program as:

1. Analytical validation – confirm the biomarker can be measured accurately and reproducibly.
2. Clinical validation – establish an association between the biomarker and a defined clinical state or outcome.
3. Clinical utility – demonstrate that use of the biomarker improves clinical decision-making or patient outcomes.
4. Clinical implementation – integrate the biomarker into routine clinical practice.

Are brain imaging biomarkers in scope?

No. Projects focusing only on the development of brain imaging biomarkers are not in scope. However, brain imaging can be included as gold standards to validate another type of biomarker.

Are you accepting applications on lifestyle approaches?

Projects focused on lifestyle approaches (e.g., diet, physical activity) are not in scope for this RFA.

Funding Specifications

Is matched funding (cash or in-kind) expected for this program?

No. Matched funding is not expected for this program.

How will funds be administered for teams with applicants from more than one institution?

Funds of awarded projects will only be provided to the institution of the Principal Applicant who must be based at a Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) qualified donee institution or non-qualified donee organization located in Canada. It is the responsibility of the Principal Applicant to subcontract and distribute/manage funds appropriately and in a timely manner.

Will a percentage of funds be available at the start of the project for project start-up costs?

Yes, however, budget details are not required in the Letter of Intent (LOI). If invited to

submit a full proposal, applicants will be asked to submit a comprehensive budget and can request a small amount of funds to cover start-up costs (e.g., REB submissions, purchasing reagents) in the "Milestones" section of the application. Further details about how to complete the proposal application template will be provided to those who are successful following the LOI stage.

How many grants will this program fund?

The Foundation is able to fund 4-6 grants through this program, with each project being funded up to a maximum of $300,000. Grants are contingent on the receipt of high-quality applications.

Can the budget be used to purchase equipment?

Funds cannot be used for large equipment purchases unless prior written approval from the Foundation has been obtained. For more details on what costs are allowed, please refer to *Section 2: Funding Specifications* of the Program Details Document.

Application Process

How many applications can I submit?

Applicants can submit a maximum of one application, when acting as a Principal Applicant, to the program. Applicants may appear as a Co-Applicant or Collaborator on any number of applications. Current or past Foundation grantees can also submit applications.

Are letters of support required at the Letter of Intent (LOI) phase?

Letters of support are only required at the Proposal phase.

How do you define preliminary data?

Preliminary data is defined as any data, from the applicants' laboratory, that can support the rationale, hypothesis, and/or feasibility of the proposed work. Data from published literature may be used to support the rationale for the study; however, preliminary data generated in the applicant's own laboratory are required to demonstrate prior experience and expertise in the research area. Preliminary data can be based on results from human or animal studies.

Review Criteria

What expertise is on the review panel?

The panel consists of an international group of academic and industry reviewers covering a range of expertise on biomarker research and development for neurodegenerative diseases of aging.

When should any confidential information be disclosed, at the LOI or Proposal stage?

Non-disclosure agreements are signed by all reviewers before any Letter of Intent (LOI), or Proposal is received for review. However, the decision of when to disclose confidential information is left to the applicant. Please note that, to be competitive, sufficient relevant information must be provided to ensure reviewers are able to adequately assess the feasibility, impact, and innovation of the idea. The review panel may request additional information beyond what is presented in the application to further assess the scientific rigor and feasibility of the project.

What is the anticipated success rate at the LOI vs full proposal stage, based on past competitions?

In the past, about 10-15% of LOIs are invited to submit a proposal, and 30-50% of proposals are funded. At the LOI phase, we are focused on the scientific merit (e.g., impact, innovation) of ideas that are in scope. For more details about the review criteria at the LOI phase, please refer to *Section 6: Review Criteria* of the Program Details document.

Eligibility of Applicants

Does the Principal Applicant need to be working at least 50% of time at a Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) qualified donee institution?

Principal Applicant must hold a position at or above the level of Assistant Professor or equivalent and be working at least 50% of the time at a CRA qualified donee institution or non-qualified donee organization located in Canada. For more information about the eligibility of principal applicants, co-applicants, and collaborators, please refer to *Section 4: Program Eligibility* of the Program Details document.

Can collaborators be based outside of Canada?

Yes. However, it is expected that most of the work will be conducted at a CRA qualified donee institution or non-qualified donee organization located in Canada. For more information about the eligibility of Principal Applicants, Co-applicants, and Collaborators, please refer to *Section 4: Program Eligibility* of the Program Details document.

Can collaborators be from industry?

Yes, but the Principal Applicant must be working in Canada at least 50% of the time and hold a position at or above the level of Assistant Professor or equivalent at a CRA qualified donee institution or non-qualified donee organization located in Canada.

Are partnerships required for submission of an application?

Partnerships are not mandatory. However, we encourage applicants to build collaborations as necessary to ensure the project team has the expertise and resources needed to successfully execute the proposed work. If a particular expertise is missing at the time of the LOI submission, it can still be added at the Proposal phase, if the applicant is invited to submit a full proposal.

Does the Foundation accept applications where the Principal Applicant is at a college, not a university?

To be eligible:

1. The institution (e.g., college) of the Principal Applicant or Co-Applicant must be a CRA-qualified donee institution or non-qualified donee organization located in Canada.
2. The Principal Applicant must be a researcher working in Canada at least 50% 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.
3. Collaborators can be working outside of Canada.

Can scientists at Government R & D institutions such as the National Research Council of Canada (NRC) apply?"

See answer above.

Can the Principal Applicant be both an academic researcher and part of a for-profit start-up?

Yes. However, please note that any eligible Principal Applicant must be a researcher working in Canada at least 50% of the time and hold a position at or above the level of Assistant Professor or equivalent at a CRA qualified donee institution or non-qualified donee organization located in Canada. For more details on applicant eligibility, please refer to *Section 4: Program Eligibility* of the Program Details document.

Do all clinical sites of a multi-site study need to be in Canada?

No. A proportion of the funds can be used for unique international resources. However, it is expected that many of the funds will go towards work conducted in Canada. For more information, please refer to *Section 2: Funding Specifications and Section 4: Program Eligibility* sections of the Program Details document.