1.0 Overview of BrainsCAN

Western University’s BrainsCAN initiative received a $66 million investment from Government of Canada’s Canada First Research Excellence Fund (CFREF), providing a significant boost to ongoing research in cognitive neuroscience and imaging. The CFREF program aims to help Canadian postsecondary institutions excel globally in research areas that create long-term economic advantages for Canada. BrainsCAN was competitively selected for funding through this program for seven years starting in September 2016. These funds were awarded to enable researchers at Western University, along with their national and international academic and commercial partners, to deliver evidence-based assessments and interventions for the diagnosis and treatment of disorders of the brain. Our goal is to significantly reduce the impact of cognitive disorders across the lifespan. To do this, our scientific approach will identify how cognitive markers map onto specific brain networks using our state-of-the-art behavioural and imaging platforms. This knowledge will radically transform our understanding of brain disorders and lead to evidence-based interventions in the classroom, in the operating room and in the clinic. The BrainsCAN initiative will accelerate Canada’s ability to deliver effective solutions to the challenge of maintaining optimal brain function across the lifespan.

2.0 Postdoctoral Scholar Program Philosophy and Structure

Training the next generation of researchers is a key aim of the BrainsCAN initiative, and postdoctoral scholars are the engines of innovative research. The BrainsCAN Postdoctoral Scholars program has been developed to attract the world’s most promising young neuroscientists and neuroimagers to Canada, and to Western. The program supports postdoctoral researchers in cognitive neuroscience at both junior (Tier II) and senior (Tier I) postdoctoral stages. Tier II scholars will generally have completed their PhD no more than two years before they apply, and Tier I applicants will generally have 2-6 years of postdoctoral experience; however exceptional candidates with fewer than 2 years of experience will be considered for Tier I awards. There will be two calls for applications per year, one in March and one in September. This program also recognizes exceptional postdoctoral scholars already at Western who are conducting BrainsCAN relevant research and who have received external postdoctoral funding. BrainsCAN will top-up external salary to Tier II or I levels (depending on candidate’s level) and will also provide the other benefits such as the research/travel allowance enjoyed by other BrainsCAN Postdoctoral Scholars.

2.1 Program Targets

BrainsCAN, Western University,
Natural Science Center, London, ON, Canada, N6A 3K7  www.uwo.ca/brainscan/
In the 2017/18 cycle, this program aims to fund seven [7] Tier II scholars and three [3] Tier I scholars; however, the actual number of funded scholars will be determined by the excellence of the candidates.

2.2 Important Dates

- Program Launch: July 14, 2017
- Fall Application Deadline: September 1, 2017
- Expected Fall Results: October 15, 2017
- Spring Application Deadline: March 1, 2018
- Expected Spring Results: April 15, 2018

3.0 Funding Level and Term Length

3.1 Postdoctoral Scholar Program Tier II

Tier II Scholars will receive $55,000/year (plus benefits) for 2 years (potentially renewable for a 3rd year) and a Research/Travel Stipend of $3,000/year. Applicants are strongly encouraged to apply for external funding, and salary will be higher if the applicant has received an external postdoctoral fellowship (see Section 9.4 for more details). Benefits include Employment Insurance, Canada Pension Plan, a health care spending account (to cover eye and dental care, prescriptions, etc), and parental leave. See Section 4.2 for Tier II eligibility.

3.2 Postdoctoral Scholar Program Tier I

Tier I Scholars will receive $70,000/year (plus benefits) for 3 years (potentially renewable for a 4th and 5th year)\(^1\) and a Research/Travel Stipend of $5,000/year. Applicants are strongly encouraged to apply for external funding, and salary will be higher if the applicant has received an external postdoctoral fellowship (see Section 9.4 for more details). Tier I applicants will have the right to apply for funding to the BrainsCAN Accelerator internal operating grant program; this fund is currently approximately $12M CAD. Benefits include Employment Insurance, Canada Pension Plan, a health care spending account (to cover eye and dental care, prescriptions, etc), and parental leave. See Section 4.3 for Tier I eligibility.

3.3 Statutory Benefits

As an employer in Ontario, Western University, together with its employees, are obligated to contribute to certain programs which are set out by federal or provincial statute. This includes the Canada Pension Plan which provides a minimum level of pension payments on

\(^1\) Western University limits the total amount of time for which an individual can be in a fulltime postdoctoral position at the University to 5 years. Thus, if a Tier I scholar already has postdoctoral experience at Western (eg as a non-BrainsCAN scholar, or as a Tier II scholar), the duration of the Tier I award (and potential renewals) will be correspondingly reduced.
Program Guidelines: 
BrainsCAN Postdoctoral Scholars Program

retirement to all Canadian workers; Employment Insurance which provides benefits when a Canadian worker is not able to fully participate in the workforce; the Ontario Health Insurance Plan, which provides Ontario residents access to physicians, hospital and other health services; and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board program, which provides workers in Ontario who are injured while on the job a stream of benefits and supports while they are unable to work due to the injury.

4.0 Applicant Eligibility

4.1 Western University Postdoctoral Scholar
The University defines a Postdoctoral Scholar as an individual who meets the following criteria: (1) the appointment is time-limited, for a period of up to four years, with the possibility of a one-year renewal (for a maximum of five years); (2) the appointment is viewed as preparatory for a full-time academic or research career; (3) the appointment involves full-time research and scholarship; (4) the individual will work under the supervision of a faculty mentor and often as part of a larger research team; and, (5) the individual is encouraged and expected to publish the results of his or her independent research during the period of the appointment. For further Western University Policies on Postdoctoral Scholars please consult http://www.grad.uwo.ca/postdoctoral_scholars/.

4.2 Tier II Eligibility
Applicants of any nationality, coming from an institution anywhere in the world, are welcome to apply. By the application deadline date, applicants will typically have defended their PhD no more than two years earlier, and (if already at Western) will have been at Western for no more than 6 months (including doctoral research) by the application deadline.

4.3 Tier I Eligibility
Applicants of any nationality, coming from an institution anywhere in the world, are welcome to apply. Tier I applications are normally expected to have at least 2 years of relevant experience (academic or industry) following completion of their doctoral degree, however exceptional candidates with less experience will be considered. By the application deadline date, applicants will have defended their PhD no more than 6 years earlier, and (if already at Western) will have been at Western for no more than 3.5 years by the application deadline.

4.4 Internal Applicants (Current Western Postdoctoral Scholars)
The BrainsCAN Postdoctoral Scholars program is intended to recruit new trainees to Western. Thus, for Tier II appointments, internal candidates will not be considered, unless at Western for less than 6 months (including doctoral research) by the application deadline. For Tier I appointments, exceptional internal candidates who have been at Western for 3.5 years or
Program Guidelines:  
BrainsCAN Postdoctoral Scholars Program

less (by the application deadline) are eligible. Given Western’s policy of a maximum postdoctoral term of 5 years, term eligibility will vary with internal experience.

4.4.1 Externally Funded Postdoctoral Scholars
Postdoctoral scholars at Western engaged in BrainsCAN-aligned research and who receive external postdoctoral funding may, through application to the BrainsCAN Postdoctoral Scholars Program, be converted to a BrainsCAN Postdoctoral Scholar Tier II (or Tier I) status for the duration of their external award (i.e., their salary will be supplemented, and they will receive the same research/travel stipend and benefits as other BrainsCAN Postdoctoral Scholars at their level). Please see Section 9.4 below for salary details for Postdoctoral scholars holding a Tri-Council postdoctoral fellowship, or other external funding equivalent to $40,000 CAD/year or more.

5.0 Research Proposal Eligibility
The research proposal must be relevant to the aims of BrainsCAN; namely development and delivery of effective solutions to the challenge of maintaining optimal brain function across the lifespan, including assessments and interventions for the diagnosis and treatment of disorders of the brain. (Please consult the BrainsCAN Research Alignment/Steering Document). Candidates are encouraged to propose innovative projects that approach the research question in an interdisciplinary, novel, way.

6.0 Proposed Advisor(s) Guidelines
Working with multiple advisors across multiple labs is strongly encouraged, particularly at the Tier I level. At least one named advisor must hold an eligible academic appointment (fulltime tenured or tenure-track faculty at the Assistant, Associate, or Full Professor level) with a significant research component at Western University. Each advisor must provide a Biosketch in the NIH format https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm. A (single) letter of support should be submitted jointly by all Advisors. The letter of support should detail the space, facilities and personnel support available to the applicant, as well as advisor commitment to the research and professional development of the applicant. Advisors should consult the BrainsCAN PDF Review Guidelines for full instructions regarding the letter of supports. Biosketches and letter will be evaluated at the review stage according to the criterion detailed in Section 8.1.5.

7.0 Application Process

7.1 Application Forms
Detailed instructions for applicants, including instructions for letters of reference, and relevant forms, are provided in the application form found on the program website.
7.2 Submission to BrainsCAN
The completed application package, including all letters, must be received at brainscan@uwo.ca by 4:30pm (Eastern time) on the day of deadline. There will be 2 calls for applications each year. The 2017/18 application deadlines are September 1, 2017, and March 1, 2018.

7.3 Equity and Diversity Survey
Please complete and submit the Self-Identification Survey found at the BrainsCAN website. The personal information collected by this survey will be used for educational, administrative and statistical purposes only and will be stored by the BrainsCAN Administration Staff to maintain confidentiality. The form is completely voluntary and will not be used in the evaluation of the application. The survey can be sent separately to the application to Katy Evans (BrainsCAN Manager, Admin & Finance) at kevans7@uwo.ca.

7.4 Troubleshooting
During the application development phase, prospective applicants are encouraged to contact the BrainsCAN team with any questions. See section 10.0 below for contact details.

8.0 Review Process
8.1 Review Criteria
Applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria. The first three criteria are adapted from Appendix A of the CIHR Reviewer’s Guide for Fellowship Awards: http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/26720.html#a7. The last two criteria are assessed as a binary, yes/no, sufficient/insufficient decision. Note that failure to pass either of these criteria will result in an unsuccessful application.

8.1.1. Achievements and Activities of Candidate (Overall weight - 40%)
- Honours, Awards and Academic Distinctions (10%):
  - Assess the number, importance and breadth of the candidate's official recognitions and special distinctions relative to their education, training and work experience.
  - Note the length of time required to complete academic programs and any indications of special academic distinctions received.
  - Determine relevance to research and whether the recognition is regional, national or international.
- Publications and Related Research Achievements (30%):
  - Research funding entries whereby the applicant was formally recorded as co-applicant, co-investigator, co-knowledge user,
collaborator, decision maker, policy maker, principal applicant, principal investigator or principal knowledge user. Training awards (e.g. predoctoral scholarships) may be entered in this section but they should be assessed as part of the “Honours, Awards and Academic Distinction” criterion.

- Evidence of research achievements relative to opportunities to date. Bear in mind that opportunities to publish may vary according to research discipline and life course (e.g., health professional career, time spent raising children, etc.).
- For publications, observe the number of co-authors and the position of the candidate's name in the authors list (note that the importance of this position can vary depending on the discipline, etc.).
- The candidate's role in publications and their estimated percent contribution to the work, as well as the type of publication (e.g., paper, article, chapter, book, etc.)
- Try to get a sense of the entire body of work and its likely impact. Note the publication dates and relate them to the candidate's education and training. Consider the list of abstracts as an indication of conference presentation activities.
- Consider the candidate's other professional activities, and any patents or copyrights to which the candidate contributed.

8.1.2. Referees’ Assessment of the Candidate’s Characteristics and Abilities (Overall weight - 25%)

- Look for evidence from the (non-Western) referees that the candidate exhibits the characteristics and skills that correlate with research career achievement.
- Examine the referees’ assessments, recognizing that positive comments are common while negative ones are not.
- Read the supporting text carefully, taking note of the extent to which the referees justify their statements.
- Look particularly for indications that the referees perceive the candidate as an investigative type, that is, someone whose thinking is critical, questioning, original and independent.
- Indications that the sponsors perceive the candidate as both energetic and capable of being highly focused.
• Look for mention of creativity in setting research goals, designing experiments, developing new methodologies, interpreting findings and presenting results in writing.

• Consider the following:
  o How long has the referee known the candidate?
  o What is the relationship of the referee to the candidate?

8.1.3. Research/Training Plan and Environment (Overall weight – 35%)

• Training Expectations (5%):
  o Assess the clarity and logic of the candidate's plans for a research career and the relevance of the proposed training.
  o Assess the description of how the training they expect to acquire will contribute to their productivity and to the research goals they hope to achieve, and how this award will enable them to establish themselves as independent investigators.
  o Justification of what they expect to learn from the training experience.
  o Evaluate the alignment and synergy between the applicant's research skills and the training opportunities expected to be provided by the proposed host lab(s).

• Proposed Research Project (20%):
  o Determine if the candidate will be able to complete the proposed research, given their education, experience and interests. Is the project the right balance of challenge, importance of the research question and feasibility in relation to the candidate's experience and training?
  o The proposed research project summary should:
    ▪ Include the specific hypothesis and describe the candidate’s role on the project;
    ▪ Provide a concise account of the subject matter, an overview of each part of the research plan, specific project aims and the methodology;
    ▪ Reflect the significance of the project.

8.1.4. Alignment with BrainsCAN

• Whether the proposed research adequately aligns with BrainsCAN aims will be assessed on a yes/no basis.
8.1.5 Research Training Environment

- Quality of the research training environment will be assessed on a sufficient/insufficient basis.
  - Determine if the space, facilities and personnel support that is available to the applicant is appropriate for the proposed research goals.
  - Determine whether the proposed advisor(s) demonstrate a commitment to the development of the applicant's research project (funding, facilities, equipment, etc.) and professional development.
  - Host labs demonstrate a track record of excellent research impact appropriate for the career level of the Principal Investigator. Criteria for recognition of work as significant vary by discipline, but might include publications (quantity, quality and citations), patents, record of external funding, record of training of HQP, and indices of ability to communicate research effectively.

9.0 Post-award Processes

9.1 Award Acceptance:

The award must be accepted within 15 working days of the date of offer or the award will be cancelled and potentially offered to the next fundable applicant.

9.2 Funding Start Date

Successful applicants must begin their award within 12 months of the date of offer. For individuals who do not yet hold a doctoral degree, awards will only begin after proof is provided that the recipient has completed all the requirements of the PhD program, including the oral examination. For foreign applicants coming to Canada, awards may only begin after proof of an entry visa into Canada is provided.

9.3 Reapplication/Renewal Process

During the terminal year of the Postdoctoral Scholar funding term, an application for a renewal of funding can be submitted. Tier II postdocs may apply for a single additional year, while Tier I scholars are able to request a two-year extension, providing the applicant would not then exceed a total of 5 years of postdoctoral experience at Western. The renewal process is under development and its evaluation will be directly linked to external funding success and/or exceptional productivity.

9.4 Opportunity to Seek External Funding
AllBrainsCAN Postdoctoral Scholars are encouraged to pursue external funding (e.g., NSERC, CIHR, or SSHRC postdoctoral fellowship), if eligible, in their first year of funding. Postdoctoral Scholars (existingBrainsCAN, and others at Western conductingBrainsCANEvangelical research) receiving a Tri-council fellowship or another external fellowship worth $40K CAD or more per year will receive, for each of the years of their external award, a salary supplement fromBrainsCAN to bring their total salary to 60K (plus 13% benefits) at the Tier II level, and 75K (plus 13% benefits) at the Tier I level.

9.5 Recognition and Reporting
AllBrainsCAN Postdoctoral Scholars should acknowledge the support ofCFREF andBrainsCAN in all related presentations and publications. Successful applicants will be required to complete progress reports outlining how this grant enriched their research, contributed to transforming their research field, and developed their career. These reports will be coordinated through theBrainsCAN Project Manager.

9.6 Frequency of applications
An applicant can submit a single application per program call (cycle). Provided the applicant meets the eligibility requirements, there is no limit to number of cycles to which an applicant can submit an application. For Advisors endorsing multiple applicants within a single call, a ranking must be provided to the Review Panel.

10.0 Contact information
The competition is administered byBrainsCAN’s administrative team (brainscan@uwo.ca). For specific questions please contact Ryan Salewski, Project Manager (ext: 86801; ryan.salewski@uwo.ca)