



Kids Brain Health Network (KBHN)

Implementation and Acceleration Programs

About This Call

KBHN's vision is that all children living with neurodisabilities (ages 0–25) enjoy quality of life, inclusion in all aspects of society, and reach their full potential. The mandate extends to age 25 in recognition that the transition to adulthood does not happen automatically at 18.

KBHN catalyzes collective action across sectors to ensure optimal care and better outcomes for kids with neurodisabilities and their families, focused on three core challenge areas: early and timely identification, effective interventions, and family support.

This call is funded through the Strategic Science Fund (SSF), a program of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED). It supports two co-produced pathways to impact: implementation (scaling through public systems) and commercialization (scaling through private/non-profit sectors i.e.: fee for service). A parallel Indigenous pathway to impact call runs separately.

The Two Streams at a Glance

	Implementation Stream	Acceleration Stream
Pathway to Impact	Implementation — adoption, integration and spread of evidence-informed solutions within health, education, community and social service systems	Commercialization — development, scaling and sustainability of evidence-informed products, services, technologies and social innovations
Award Amount	Up to \$200,000/year, up to 2 years	Up to \$100,000/year, for 2 years
Matching Requirement	1:1 minimum, from eligible non-federal cash and/or in-kind contributions	1:1 minimum, from eligible non-federal cash and/or in-kind contributions, with at least 25% in cash
Who can apply	Academics at a Canadian university or college; research institutes and healthcare organizations; non-profit organizations and community groups; multi-sector partnerships	Canadian-incorporated SMEs and start-ups; social enterprises; not-for-profit organizations; Academic researchers/teams with a clear commercialization strategy and pathway (Ex: intention to spin out IP and incorporate)

Not sure which program is right for you?

Projects whose primary objective is the implementation and adoption of innovations within health, education, community or social service systems will likely align better with the **Implementation Program**. Implementation projects generally engage publicly funded systems.

Projects whose primary objective is creating a new company, filing patents, licensing, or scaling from validation to early revenue will likely align better with the **Acceleration Program**. Acceleration projects navigate sustainability through commercial pathways.

When are applications due?

- **Application deadline:** November 9, 6:00 p.m. Pacific Time. Late applications will not be considered.
- **Anticipated award start date:** April 1, 2027.

Eligibility Criteria

What types of research projects are considered for funding?

KBHN supports transformative research and implementation in three core challenge areas:

- **Early Identification:** Early identification through evidence-based interventions whose supports are ready to be harnessed are critical for optimal outcomes.
- **Access to Interventions:** Timely evidence-based interventions for neurodisabilities ready to scale in an accessible manner in all parts of the country to diverse cultures and communities where there is a demonstrated need.
- **Family Support:** Improved supports for children living with neurodisabilities and their families which are too often fragmented and inadequate. These supports will address caregiver stress and anxiety, and improve their ability to participate in the workforce, and improve the quality of life for both children and families.

What are the eligibility criteria for applicants?

The proposed Program must:

- Advance solutions that improve outcomes for children (ages 0–25) with neurodisabilities and their families, in at least one KBHN priority area.
- Engage families and/or individuals with lived experience as equal team members in the design, conduct, analysis and dissemination of the work.
- Involve knowledge user partners well-positioned to adopt and implement the program outputs.
- Implementation stream: include a team member with training in implementation science or hands-on experience implementing solutions in the real world.
- Have a nominated Principal Investigator(PI)/Project Lead(PL) eligible to receive operating funds under the SSF. A university appointment is not required, and a lead or co-lead can be based at a partner organization.
- Be led by a Canada-based team with Canadian families and workers as the primary focus. International collaboration is welcomed and international partners can be team members. All funded expenses must be spent in Canada, however international investments into this Canadian program can count toward the matching requirement. Projects do not need to start out national in scope, but must be scalable nationally. Implementation projects are expected to be multi-jurisdictional (at least 2 provinces).
- All projects will be expected to produce content in both of Canada's national languages (French and English).

Applications are required to include:

- A written commitment that KBHN's investment will be matched from non-federal sources at a ratio of at least 1:1 (cash and/or in-kind, per stream-specific rules), backed by letters of support.
- A detailed sustainability plan — scaling/implementation into practice for the Implementation stream; a commercialization strategy, go-to-market strategy, or sustainability pathway for the Acceleration stream.

What will applications be evaluated on?

- Strength of the research/venture team, including the commitment of partners and key stakeholders.
- Current state of knowledge/evidence supporting uptake of the innovation.
- Meaningful engagement of people with lived experience in the design, conduct, analysis and/or dissemination of the work.
- Strength of the proposal in addressing Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility, and representation of underserved populations.
- Relevance to KBHN's priority areas.
- Impact and feasibility of achieving expected outcomes within the funding period.
- Opportunities for training of Highly Qualified Personnel.
- Scale and spread strategy and sustainability plan, including potential near- and long-term impact on children and families.

For team members with implementation science training or equivalent experience, is there a clear definition of what counts as implementation experience in place of a formal certification?

No single certification is required. KBHN works collaboratively with funded teams in a “fund and foster” environment and provides implementation supports. The important thing is having an identified team member able to participate in and operationalize those supports. Formal certifications and trainings (e.g., through The Center for Implementation, SickKids, or AbSPORU) are fantastic and strongly encouraged, but a breadth of experience, and webinars, experiential learning, hands-on implementation work can also qualify. It is incumbent on applicants to make the case for their team member's expertise in the team and training section, pointing to examples of past implementation experience.

What if we don't have a person with implementation training?

KBHN requires all projects in the Implementation stream to have someone with implementation training on the project team. KBHN has invested in training cohorts of Highly Qualified People through the level 1 Implementation Center Certificate. Should a project team need someone with implementation training, please reach out to cfortier@kidsbrainhealth.ca and we can facilitate introductions to individuals with implementation training who may be a good fit to support your project.

Are multidisciplinary or collaborative projects encouraged?

Yes. Strength of the research team, including the commitment of partners is an evaluation criterion. Due to the nature of the projects we are funding, multi- and trans-disciplinary teams are expected.

Are KBHN programs and funding options available to programs in the US?

We are excited when teams collaborate internationally; however, the PI/PL for these programs need to be located in Canada and have Canada as their primary focus.

Do projects need to be bilingual?

No. Projects can be submitted in either English or French, however projects will be expected to meet the bilingual communication requirements of a federally funded program.

Would a provincial project qualify for this grant or does it have to be national?

We welcome all applications that meet the funding criteria and advances one of our priority areas: Early Identification, Access to interventions, and Family supports, and applications from groups led by people with lived experience. The projects must be scalable nationally; however, it does not need to start national in scope. Implementation projects are expected to be multi-jurisdictional (at least 2 provinces).

Can projects funded in past KBHN cycles apply?

Yes. Successful projects funded in past cycles by KBHN or NCE funding may apply; however, they must continue to meet the new criteria. Having received funding from KBHN in the past will neither positively nor negatively impact in the evaluation. All proposals will be equally evaluated based on content of submission.

Are there ethical approval requirements that need to be met before applying?

No, but there needs to be a clear path to ethics approval for proposals that require it. Implementation projects are not necessarily research projects and can often be considered Quality Improvement projects which do not require ethics approval.

Can projects involve partnerships with industry or non-profit organizations?

Yes.

Can an applicant submit more than one proposal in a funding cycle?

An applicant can be on multiple proposals as a Co-Investigator or Co-PI. However, an applicant can only be the successful nominated PI/PL on one proposal. Project teams can submit to both streams if appropriate, however, a PI/POL can only hold funding from one funding stream at a time.

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Lived Experience

How do you define Equity Diversity, Inclusion?

- **Equity** is about fairness. It is about deliberate efforts to ensure processes for allocating resources and decision-making are fair and do not discriminate on the basis of personal characteristics. Equity is a summative concept that is the outcome of deliberate efforts to create more diverse and inclusive approaches to organizational practices and to program delivery, including research. Equity results in parity of outcomes for members of under-represented groups or for those who face discrimination.
- **Diversity** is about representation. It brings a focus to the representation of groups that have traditionally been under-represented and have faced systemic discrimination in spheres as varied as employment, participation in clinical research, or in attracting research funding. Diversity is a dynamic concept. Some individuals may identify in ways that do not change over time. For others, the ways in which they identify may evolve over time. For example, sexual identity may change over time.
- **Inclusion** is about belonging. It is socially constructed. It brings into focus the climate or culture that fosters belonging in workplaces or when participating in activities or programs. Belonging cannot be mandated; it is experienced. While diversity is measured more objectively, inclusion relies on qualitative metrics.
- **Equity Deserving Groups** means racialized persons, such as Black Canadians; persons living with disabilities, including invisible and episodic disabilities; members of the 2SLGBTQI+ communities; and First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples who are under-represented in positions of economic influence and leadership.

Beyond having individuals with lived experience on the team, what level of formal integration or compensation model does the review panel expect to see documented?

The budget template includes a dedicated compensation line for lived experience, which links to the [CHILD-BRIGHT compensation guidelines](#) as a suggested compensation model. Documenting this type of compensation activity is strongly encouraged.

Will companies made by, for and led by people with disabilities be prioritized?

KBHN takes lived experience leadership very seriously. Having those with lived experience as the lead, founder or PI is a genuine strength. Note that even where the lead has lived experience, KBHN asks that a distinct lived experience partner be identified on the team. Since the lead wears many hats, this additional partner grounds the project with their expertise, can participate in KBHN development supports, and further grow the ecosystems of highly-qualified lived experience leaders. KBHN's Programs Advisory Committee itself includes a range of experience (50% of members are people with lived experience) who will assess each application on its own merits.

What if we don't have a person with lived experience?

KBHN requires all projects to include someone with lived experience, as this improves the project from design to delivery. If your team does not currently include an individual with lived experience and would like to be connected to someone, please reach out to cfortier@kidsbrainhealth.ca. We can facilitate introductions to individuals with lived experience who have completed the Family Engagement in Research course and may be a good fit to support your project.

Application Package and Process

What documents are required for the application submission?

Use the templates posted on the KBHN website. The full application includes:

- **Proposal (10-page limit):** objectives, methods, outcomes, evaluation plan, timelines, key milestones, each team member's role, and the sustainability plan. Acceleration applicants should include their business plan, go-to-market strategy or sustainability pathway.
- **Project team description (1 page):** NPI/project lead, co-PIs/co-applicants, collaborators, partners and interest holders. Link back to how the team fits into the overall proposal.
- **EDIA statement (1 page):** Equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility statement addressing underrepresented groups.
- **Abstract (1 page).**
- **Lay summary (200 words max):** written for a general audience.
- **Impact statement (2 pages):** describing the metrics you will use to assess success; e.g., number of children/families who will benefit, knowledge-user organizations involved, expected new policies or practices, new IP, or new/expanded commercialization markets.
- **Summary of progress (1 page, separate from the budget):** the NPI/lead's other relevant activities, how this proposal fits their broader program, why the funding is needed now, and how it differs from other funds held or applied for.
- **Supporting materials:** budget justification and completed budget template, references, letters of support backing matched funding, and CVs for the NPI/lead, co-PIs and co-applicants (narrative CV format strongly encouraged, but not mandatory — any format that fits the applicant is accepted).

How do we submit?

Please submit on the [KBHN - Call for Proposals Submission Portal](#). Submissions will not be accepted via email unless pre-approved.

Do we need a CV for each team member, and what is the preferred template of the requested CVs?

A CV is requested for every member, and the narrative CV format is strongly encouraged wherever possible. However, it is not mandatory to use one specific format, and CVs are accepted in the format that makes the most sense for each applicant. This being said, tailored CVs that outline the context of how each individual will contribute to the project as described makes an application stronger.

Is there feedback provided for unsuccessful applications?

Due to the volume of the applications we receive, we are unable to guarantee tailored feedback to unsuccessful applications.

Funding, Matching, & Budget

What costs can be considered in-kind?

Eligible:

- Actual salary cost
- Cost for 1 license per software package
- Cost of equivalent commercial product, where donated software is not commercially available

Not Eligible:

- Flat-rate charges for overhead costs (indirect costs)
- Cost of developing or maintaining database
- Salary overheads
- External charge-out or consultant rates

For full details please review [Strategic Science Fund Guidelines](#) for calculating the value of in kind contributions or email cfortier@kidsbrainhealth.ca with specific questions.

What are the matching fund criteria for this opportunity?

Matched funding must be identified specifically for this project (i.e.: not as overhead costs for multiple projects). The matching can be made up of multiple partner contributions, including from foundations, as long as they're identified as specifically funding this project and for the duration of the project (i.e.: not funding set to end prior to the expected end date of the project with KBHN).

Is there a requirement for matching funds or institutional support?

Matched funding is required and must be contributions (cash or in-kind) to be spent on the SSF project. Match funds cannot include any federal source, including all federal sources that flow through separate entities (e.g. Tri-Agency funding to universities, federal funding to other organizations). Whilst these sources of funding do not count as match funding, the potential for leveraging other federal funding is encouraged. Matched funds for this competition cannot have been reported as matching funds for another federal program.

Can matching funds come from a provincial government?

Yes. Matched funds can come from any non-federal government entity or source (provincial, municipal, community, corporate, etc.).

Does it matter if the match is cash or in-kind?

No judging weight is placed on cash vs. in-kind, rather, judging weight is on the strength of partnerships and the team. The one exception: Acceleration stream matches must be at least 25% cash. Both streams may match at more than 1:1.

What matching contributions are accepted, and do existing operational/R&D costs count?

The program guide sets out eligible match criteria and templates for valuing contributions (e.g., in-kind time must be calculated at defined thresholds, not an arbitrary rate). Operational or R&D expenditures must be explicitly directed at this project's activities to count; ongoing operational funding does not qualify. KBHN funds themselves do not cover overhead, admin, or operational costs.

Will KBHN help applicants secure matched funding?

No. KBHN cannot help to applicants to secure matched funding.

Can this funding cover a full clinical trial?

Award amounts (up to \$200,000/year for Implementation) are generally not intended to fund a full clinical trial on their own; the intent is implementation and scaling, so funding might co-fund the implementation components of a trial (e.g., a hybrid design). Teams in this situation should reach out to talk it through.

Can funds be spent outside Canada, or go to international partners?

All funded expenses must be spent in Canada. International collaborators can be team members and can count toward the 1:1 match.

Is there a cap on international impact or participants?

No, international reach and impact are welcomed. The requirement is only that the KBHN funding itself stays in Canada.

Intellectual Property, Evaluation, & Reporting

How are intellectual property rights managed for projects funded through KBHN?

At KBHN, we are committed to improving outcomes for children and families. Our funding goes to initiatives led by innovators with a clear commitment to seeing their solutions put into practice and scaled across Canada, ensuring they reach those who need them most.

We recognize that intellectual property (IP) can present challenges, as policies differ between institutions. However, we believe IP should not become a barrier to spreading and scaling projects. It's important that the benefits of these innovations aren't limited by geographic or institutional boundaries. For example, an institution preventing the spread of a project beyond its province would limit its potential impact, which we aim to avoid.

At KBHN, we will work closely with our partners and/or their institutions to ensure that the projects we invest in can grow and be implemented more broadly. Our focus is always on maximizing positive outcomes for children and families nationwide. In return, we expect our role in helping these projects succeed to be recognized through fair participation in the benefits generated. This partnership approach is key to ensuring that our support leads to lasting, meaningful change. KBHN is positioned as a mission and sector-aligned partner and all projects, including implementation projects, may see commercialization pathways as an eventual pathway to scale and KBHN may seek to further invest and support their pathway to Impact. As a result the [KBHN-Preferred-Partnership-Status.pdf](#) is part of our contribution agreements.

What are the reporting requirements?

Annual reporting (quantitative financial reporting plus a qualitative impact narrative), periodic check-ins through the year, and an end-of-project report at the close of year two.

What KPIs matter most for the Acceleration stream?

The posted review criteria weight success more heavily toward scaling metrics than revenue. Revenue is a consideration but not the basis for evaluation. Different teams may lean into different KPIs; KBHN works with funded teams to clarify theirs.

Is funding milestone-gated?

Funding is provided annually at the point of funding with milestones reviewed through ongoing conversations. Specific details are addressed during the contribution agreement with successful applicants.

What obligations do researchers have regarding open access?

We follow Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications.

Ongoing Support & Future Opportunities

What support does KBHN offer funded programs?

KBHN is building expertise in implementation, commercialization, and impact evaluation and communication and will work with successful applicants to facilitate access to supports as needed for them to achieve success.

Will KBHN offer the Implementation and Acceleration Programs funding opportunity every year?

We are excited to offer this current round of funding and are committed to supporting as many proposals as possible that meet our criteria and demonstrate implementation readiness. The decision to open another call next year will depend on the volume and quality of proposals we receive this year, and contingent on our ongoing funding from our federal partner. We encourage you to submit your proposal and stay updated on upcoming opportunities through our newsletter.

Still Have Questions?

The program guide, templates, review criteria and preferred partnership status clause are all posted on the KBHN website. Please reach out to cfortier@kidsbrainhealth.ca with additional questions. The team is happy to talk through stream fit, eligibility, match funding, or engagement strategy before an applicant submits.