Please read the RFA and review the application guide and rating criteria prior to submitting your application. If you cannot find an answer, please contact research@cancer.ca for more information.

ELIGIBILITY:

1. If I am in the last year or last two years of my program, am I eligible? Can I still apply if I am halfway through my current program?

For Master’s:

If Master’s candidates qualify for a PhD program in the same lab with the same project before the end of the award, they can contact CCS to transfer up to 1 year of their stipend and training budget to their PhD. The stipend and training budget amounts will remain unchanged (master's levels). The training award will be cancelled if there are changes in the project itself or within the laboratory. Applicants will be eligible to apply for the PhD Research Training Award in subsequent rounds provided they meet the eligibility criteria associated with the program. Future rounds may have different requirements or eligibility contingent upon the availability of funding.

For PhD candidates:

If you are enrolled in an eligible Canadian institution in an eligible program, you can be supported until the 5th year of your program. If you plan to request an award that extends beyond your 5th year in the program, please contact CCS. The minimum duration of the award requested is 2 years (September 2024 to August 2026).

CCS is looking to prioritize funding the majority of an applicant’s training, but you are still eligible to apply if you are enrolled in a program. There is no numerical penalty assigned to senior students or shorter stipends. Review decisions are complex, and reviewers take many factors into consideration – evaluation criteria are available on our website.

For PDF:

There are no upper limits of when you can apply except you may not hold an independent appointment at an institution and must maintain your postdoctoral status throughout the duration of the award. The main focus of your time should be dedicated to the proposed research project throughout the tenure of the award.

2. I am transitioning or fast-tracking to a PhD program. Which award should I apply for?

Please apply for the award level in which you will be enrolled when the award starts. For instance, apply for the PhD award if you will be in a PhD program in September 2024. You must also have proof of
conditional acceptance into the program by the full application deadline. If Master’s candidates qualify for a PhD program in the same lab with the same project before the end of the award, they can contact CCS to transfer up to 1 year of their stipend and training budget to their PhD. The stipend and training budget amounts will remain unchanged (master's levels).

3. **I hold, or used to hold, another award (such as a Vanier FRQS or CIHR CGS-D). Am I eligible?**

   If you currently or plan to hold another award where the **prorated monthly stipend amount** is worth at least **40% of the RTA amount** (such as CIHR, CGS, Vanier or FRQS) on September 1st, 2024, you are **ineligible** for the Research Training Award. Applicants may apply to multiple awards concurrently but may not hold both awards at the same time. If you have held an award previously but do not hold one now, you are eligible.

4. **Are international students eligible?**

   For Master’s and PhD levels of training, applicants must be **Canadian citizens, permanent residents, or Indigenous** (First Nations, Inuit, or Métis). International trainees are not eligible to apply currently.

5. **I hold a work permit as an international Postdoctoral fellow. Am I eligible?**

   If Postdoctoral fellows hold a **valid work permit** over the duration of the award by the application deadline, they may apply for this award. The support requested can only be over the period of a valid work permit. The minimum duration of the award requested for PDF is 1 year (September 2024 to August 2025).

**RESEARCH:**

1. **Is my research relevant?**

   We recognize that health and wellness are broad concepts and that cancer is interrelated to many aspects of health and healthcare. We also recognize and honour Indigenous ways of knowing and the great benefits of diverse thinking. We support cancer-related research broadly - the ultimate goal of the research should look to benefit the cancer ecosystem; but this can be inclusive of many different areas of research, such as health equity, Indigenous health, prevention (explicitly linked to cancer), diagnosis, treatment, and quality of life after cancer treatment. If you are unsure if your research may qualify as cancer-related for this competition, please ask us.

2. **I work in basic science / biomedical research. Is patient engagement relevant for my application?**

   Yes. Research shows that all areas of science, including basic biomedical science, benefit from engagement of stakeholders – patients, caregivers, other people with lived experience, or people affected by the research. CCS requires or recommends the meaningful engagement of patients or other
stakeholders in all of our funding opportunities. Please see our website for resources on engaging patients and stakeholders.

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT:

1. **Can a statement of support be provided by a professor / government member?**

   No. Consider a statement of support from someone with lived experience of cancer (as patient or caregiver or with a loved one). This is not a formal reference letter but an opportunity for someone outside of academia with an experience of cancer to support the applicant’s application.

2. **How do I pick the best patient / survivor / caregiver for my statement of support?**

   You’re seeking a statement from an individual affected by cancer who can provide insight into your research or clinical focus, as well as your connection with the cancer community. This isn’t a formal academic reference letter but rather a chance for a new collaboration/discussion. It’s an opportunity for someone beyond academic circles (someone with firsthand experience of cancer) to portray you as an individual and highlight your potential and endorse your application.

   This person might be directly engaged in your research as an advisor or someone who will partner with you in devising and executing your knowledge transfer strategy. This discussion/collaboration can be with an individual you have a past, present, or brand-new relationship with.

   Unless highly relevant, avoid direct family members as reviewers might question conflict of interests and how biased/objective the testimony is. It could be a cancer survivor or patient advocate, a non-profit organization leader/volunteer, medical practitioners, support group organizers... If any healthcare professionals are considered, they should not be part of the direct research team.

   For Indigenous applicants (First Nations, Inuit, or Métis), a community member who can speak to your connection to community and/or your potential impact in cancer research, is accepted.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

1. **I’m a postdoctoral fellow and work independently. Does a mentorship plan still apply?**

   Yes – scientific progress overall is collaborative, and doing science alone, in a vacuum, limits our ability to find solutions to problems or apply the creativity that collaboration brings. Everyone needs to develop skills and gain exposure to knowledge in multiple areas. This may include various areas of science, business, entrepreneurship, soft skills, cultural or lived experience. We urge you to think about the many ways you may benefit from mentorship in these and other areas, and to design your mentorship plan (as mentee) accordingly.

2. **What counts as cross-disciplinary (enough) training?**
We encourage a broad definition of training - something outside of your immediate area of cancer research. Consider health sciences, social sciences, data science, natural sciences, engineering, and other areas of training or learning. What would support your growth and innovation? Be creative in the training opportunity: trainee exchanges, co-supervision of trainees, internships, reciprocal laboratory visits, workshops, courses, webinars, community-based or collaborative learning, and other innovative ways to train and learn are encouraged.

GENERAL:

1. **What else can you tell me about the Research Training Awards?**

   Please read the RFA.

2. **Who receives the award – the supervisor or the student?**

   The award is to be made to the trainee – it is the trainee who applies and receives the award. The stipend amount will be sent to your financial institution. The training budget will be managed by CCS and receipts will be submitted to us directly (by the awardee or the institution) for reimbursement.

3. **What can I use the training budget for?**

   The training budget can be spent throughout the duration of the award. Only expenditures related to training may be purchased or expensed using the training budget. The training budget can also be used to support mentorship with mentors outside of academia (community, patients, caregivers, business leaders, etc.), including remuneration for mentors. Note that a maximum of 50% of the budget may be directed toward attending traditional academic conferences. Consider setting aside the equivalent of 1 flight every other year to Vancouver or Toronto for a CCS in-person event gathering all ongoing RTA cohorts.

4. **What is not eligible in the training budget?**

   Tuition for the main program of study, equipment or supplies for ongoing research are ineligible expenses. Any expenses that are the responsibility of the lab or host institution will not be accepted (eg: overhead cost, expendables/supplies, reagents, publications...). The training budget is to be managed by the successful applicant, while complying with any institutional policies (i.e., that may require supervisor sign-off or other restrictions).

5. **How many (Master’s / PhD / Postdoctoral Fellow) Awards are being given?**
We have elected not to publish a number, because the number of awards that we are able to fund has been increasing as funding becomes available from CCS and partners. We will elect to balance awards across levels and fund the maximum allowable by the funding envelope.

6. **Can I defer my award if I go on parental leave?**

   Yes. Please see our parental leave policy here.

7. **Will there be another round of Research Training Awards next year / later?**

   We anticipate that Research Training Awards will be recurring (every other year), and we intend to learn from each round. Future rounds may have different requirements or eligibility and are subject to available funding.