



## WE-SPARK Health Institute Igniting Discovery Grants Program 2026 Guidelines

The annual WE-SPARK Igniting Discovery Grants Program was created to invest in emerging, innovative, and novel health research and education projects that are aligned with WE-SPARK Health Institute’s mission and strategic priorities.

### RESEARCH AREAS

The Igniting Discovery Grants will provide source funding to promote the development of early-stage, innovative health research and health education projects in Windsor-Essex. These projects may include studies related to emerging topics in health, addressing gaps in healthcare needs, igniting new health ideas, generating, and disseminating knowledge, and sparking collaborations. The intent is to:

1. Provide new research teams/research programs with support to pursue quality projects.
2. Encourage exploratory and discovery-oriented projects.
3. Boost collaborations in the Windsor-Essex community and beyond.

These grants are intended to provide seed funding which could potentially be leveraged to generate interest and eagerness in the Windsor-Essex health research environment, result in practice changes and/or policy reform, create a wider and all-encompassing health research portfolio in Windsor-Essex, and obtain new funding from other sources.

### PRIORITY AREAS

Priority announcements offer additional sources of funding for highly rated applications that are relevant to specific eligibility criteria or research areas and are sponsored by organizations, institutions, or groups.

Priority Area/Sponsor	Funds Available	Specific Requirements
Open Call	\$20,000 available for multiple projects	All health related grants submitted by a Principal Investigator with a primary affiliation from one of the five WE-SPARK partner organizations
Cancer Research, <a href="#">Windsor Cancer Centre Foundation</a>	A total of 2-3 funded projects of up to \$30,000	Seeking to fund investigation into the following or similar research areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cancer prevention, screening, diagnosis</li> <li>• Cancer treatments</li> <li>• Psycho-social cancer research areas (ex. support systems, mental health, cancer disparities)</li> <li>• Palliation</li> </ul>
Childhood Cancer Research, <a href="#">ChildCan</a>	\$20,000 available to fund 1 project	Seeking to fund investigation into the following or similar research areas:

Priority Area/Sponsor	Funds Available	Specific Requirements
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Childhood cancer prevention, treatment, screening, diagnosis</li> <li>• Childhood psycho-social cancer research areas (ex. support systems, mental health, cancer disparities)</li> </ul>
Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplant Research, <a href="#">Katelyn Bedard Bone Marrow Association</a>	Funds available to fund 1 project	Seeking to fund investigation into any of the following or similar research areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Techniques to improve the success rate of hematopoietic stem cell transplants.</li> <li>• Techniques to reduce or eliminate adverse side effects of hematopoietic stem cell transplants.</li> <li>• Establishment of hematopoietic stem cell donor registries and recruitment of hematopoietic stem cell donors to increase the number of matching donors found.</li> <li>• Education and awareness of hematopoietic stem cell donation and hematopoietic stem cell donor registries.</li> <li>• Emotional, financial, or physical support for hematopoietic stem cell transplant recipients and their families.</li> </ul>
Community Health & Well-Being Grant, GreenShield	\$20,000 available to fund 1 project	Funding will support research focused on mental health, with priority given to investigations within one of the following five populations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth</li> <li>• Women</li> <li>• Low-income workers</li> <li>• Racialized communities</li> <li>• 2SLGBTQI+</li> </ul> <p><i>Principal applicant and/or co-applicant <b>must hold a primary affiliation with the University of Windsor.</b></i></p>

*Priority areas listed below are sponsored by University of Windsor Faculties with 30% matching funds provided by the Vice-President, Research and Innovation. Applicants **must hold a primary affiliation with the University of Windsor.***

- All areas of health research are eligible.
- Projects that collaborate with at least one other WE-SPARK affiliated institution or researcher to promote interdisciplinary research will be prioritized

Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences	\$7,000 available to fund 1 project	<p>Applicants must hold a primary affiliation with the <b>Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences</b> throughout the funding term.</p> <p>Preference will be given to researchers who explore new research questions and/or approaches that are distinct from applicant's previous/ongoing research</p>
<p>Odette School of Business*</p> <p><b>*Please use the <a href="#">IDEA Grant LOI</a> and Application forms to apply for this specific funding call. Ensure 'business' is selected under the 'Disciplines' question.</b></p>	\$5,000 available to fund 1 project	<p>Applicants must hold a primary affiliation with the <b>Odette School of Business</b> throughout the funding term.</p> <p>Research should articulate intended contributions at the intersection of health and any business discipline.</p>
Faculty of Education	\$7,000 available to fund 1 project	Applicants must hold a primary affiliation with the <b>Faculty of Education</b> throughout funding term.
Faculty of Engineering	\$20,000 available to fund 1 project	Applicants must hold a primary affiliation with the <b>Faculty of Engineering</b> throughout funding term.
Faculty of Human Kinetics	\$20,000 available to fund 1 project	Applicants must hold a primary affiliation with the <b>Faculty of Human Kinetics</b> throughout funding term
Faculty of Nursing	\$20,000 available to fund 1 project	<p>Applicants must hold a primary affiliation with the <b>Faculty of Nursing</b> throughout the funding term.</p> <p>Focus should be relevant for nursing in one or more areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advancing nursing and interdisciplinary knowledge.</li> <li>• Promoting quality of care for all.</li> <li>• Developing/implementing health policy.</li> <li>• Supporting a competent and satisfied health human resources workforce.</li> </ul>
Faculty of Science	Funding for projects up to \$20,000	<p>Applicants must hold a primary affiliation with the <b>Faculty of Science</b> throughout the funding term and did not receive a grant in the 2024 or 2025 Igniting Discovery Grant competition.</p> <p>Priority will be given to projects with collaboration across departments in the Faculty of Science and beyond.</p>

## ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible to apply, you must:

1. Be a Principal Applicant (PA) with a recognized clinical, academic, or research credential (e.g., MD, PhD, RN, NP, Allied Health Professional, or equivalent) and be a Core member of WE-SPARK. Eligibility for Partner Priority funding opportunities will depend on the Partner and their mandates.
  - a. The term of affiliation must at least cover the proposed project period.
2. Not have secured funding for the research project you are proposing for this grant program.
3. Not currently hold an active Igniting Discovery grant.

Co-applicants must have either Core Membership or an Affiliate Membership with WE-SPARK.

**Location of Project:**

The research activity is expected to be primarily performed at 1 of the WE-SPARK Partner Institutions. If another location is proposed, strong justification must be provided.

**Multiple Applications:**

1. An individual cannot submit more than 1 application as PA per grant competition. This individual may however participate as a Co-applicant or Collaborator on other applications.

**Subsequent Funding:**

An eligible PA who has held an Igniting Discovery Grant is permitted to be a PA on a subsequent Igniting Discovery Grant application only if:

1. previously held Igniting Discovery grant is completed with all funds spent and a final report submitted; **and**
2. The subsequent application is for a research project or program that was not previously supported by an Igniting Discovery Grant or other external funding.

**FUNDING**

One-year grant(s) will be awarded and are expected to be used for approved research-related expenditures. Automatic one (1) year no-cost extensions are applicable to all grants. If further extension is required, a request with valid justification will need to be made. This grant is intended to support research consumables and non-consumables, salaries for research personnel, small equipment (under 5K), costs of workshops/meetings, travel costs for research conferences, and publication costs of research conducted. Budgets will be evaluated for feasibility.

**Non-eligible Expenses:**

1. Faculty or Clinician salary
2. Tuition support
3. Office equipment

**Management of Funds:**

Funds will be administered either through: 1) Office of Research & Integrity Services (ORIS) at the University of Windsor (for PAs holding an appointment at the University of Windsor, Hotel-Dieu Grace Healthcare, Windsor Regional Hospital, or Erie Shores Healthcare); or 2) Applied Research & Development Office at St. Clair College (for PAs holding an appointment at St. Clair College).

**Conditions of Funding:**

1. Awardees are required to attend a public presentation to receive their awards.
2. If an application is approved for funding, any required Research Ethics Board, Animal Care, or Biosafety certifications must be active before funds are released. Where applicable, applicants may instead provide documentation such as an exemption letter, waiver of consent, or confirmation that no clearance is necessary.
3. It is the responsibility of the PA to maintain their eligibility throughout the term of the grant and to immediately notify the respective office at either the University of Windsor or St. Clair College of any changes that may affect their eligibility to continue to hold the grant.
4. Funds not spent at the end of the one-year grant term may be extended for a reasonable period upon request. Unless otherwise arranged, funds not spent by the grant end date must be returned.
5. In publications and presentations to both academic and non-academic audiences, researchers must acknowledge:
  - a. Their affiliation as a WE-SPARK member
  - b. WE-SPARK Health Institute’s support through the use of the WE-SPARK logo or a statement (i.e. “This study was supported by an Igniting Discovery Grant from the WE-SPARK Health Institute”).
6. Upon completion of the grant, the PA will be responsible for completing a final report provided by respective offices at either the University of Windsor or St. Clair College.

**EVALUATION**

**Evaluation Criteria:**

<b>Merit/ Quality of Research Proposal</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Proposed research program is clear, innovative</li><li>2. Methodology is clearly defined and appropriate</li><li>3. Proposed research considers equity, diversity, and inclusion as well as sex/gender appropriately</li><li>4. Proposal distinguishes how funding is distinct from other funded programs</li><li>5. Proposed research is feasible with respect to team, timelines, proposed methods, budget, etc.</li></ol>
<b>Excellence of Research Team</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Researcher/ research team is appropriate and complete</li><li>2. Role of research member(s) clearly defined</li><li>3. Potential for adding new health research capacity in a critical area</li></ol>
<b>Impact of Research</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Potential of proposed research to capture new, larger grant funding in the future</li><li>2. Potential of proposed research in having ground-breaking advancements in health, clinical/health education practices, health-tech or health policy</li></ol>

**Other qualifiers that will be evaluated:**

1. Has the proposed research been submitted to a priority research announcement?
2. Applicant’s institution and department (equal distribution of grants to partner institutions).

3. Level of collaboration across institutions or departments (projects demonstrating cross-institutional or cross-departmental collaboration will be viewed favourably).
4. Previous outcomes from WE-SPARK grants (priority will be given to applicants who demonstrate meaningful results and provide a brief summary of outcomes from prior WE-SPARK-funded projects).

## COMPETITION TIMELINES

<b>February 27, 2026</b>	Grants programs launched.
<b>April 3, 2026</b>	Letters of Intent (LOIs) to be submitted through <a href="#">AirTable</a> .  Competitiveness at the LOI stage refers solely to meeting eligibility and primary affiliation requirements; assessment of scientific merit occurs only at the full application stage. All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their LOI by April 10, 2026.
<b>May 8, 2026</b>	Final grant applications and packages to be submitted through <a href="#">AirTable</a> .
<b>July 31, 2026</b>	Notices of decisions.
<b>September 16, 2026</b>	Award ceremony.
<b>September 2026</b>	Funding start date.

### **Contact Information**

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