



Research Program Lead Opportunity & Application Package

WE-SPARK Health Institute is launching a new **Research Program Lead** model to accelerate research growth, strengthen collaboration across partner institutions, and create a coordinated vision for research excellence within our key research pillars.

Research Program Leads will serve as ambassadors for one of WE-SPARK's key research pillars while working closely with WE-SPARK leadership, partner institutions, researchers, clinicians, trainees, and community partners to advance a shared vision for impact.

About WE-SPARK Health Institute

WE-SPARK Health Institute brings together researchers, clinicians, healthcare providers, trainees, people with lived or living experience (PWLLE), community organizations, and partner institutions to advance health research excellence through collaboration and innovation.

By connecting expertise across disciplines and sectors, WE-SPARK helps create opportunities for research growth, training of highly qualified personnel, knowledge mobilization, capacity building, and real-world impact.

WE-SPARK members' research strengths are organized into three key research pillars:

- Cancer
- Behavioural & Brain Health
- Community Health & Well-Being

To strengthen leadership within each research pillar and support long-term growth, WE-SPARK is introducing **Research Program Leads**.

Cancer Research Program Leads

Beginning with the **Cancer Research Program**, WE-SPARK is **seeking two Research Program Leads** (one academic and one clinical) who will work together to shape the future of cancer research across Windsor-Essex and beyond by advancing strategic priorities, fostering collaborations, supporting investigators and trainees, attracting new opportunities, and helping continue to build a vibrant and sustainable cancer research ecosystem.

Funded by the following WE-SPARK Strategic Alliance Organizations:



CANCER
RESEARCH
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The Cancer Research Program

Cancer remains one of the most significant health challenges facing our communities. Cancer research is deeply woven into WE-SPARK's history and growth. Since inception, WE-SPARK has cultivated a strong and engaged cancer research community, supported by dedicated donors committed to improving health outcomes. **The inaugural Program Leads will be instrumental** in leveraging this established momentum to define future priorities, strengthen connections across the cancer research ecosystem, and expand WE-SPARK's impact in cancer research and innovation.

The Program Lead Opportunity

The **two Program Leads** will work collaboratively with each other, WE-SPARK leadership, and the broader cancer research community to provide strategic direction and foster a cohesive, inclusive, and impactful Cancer Research Program. Program Leads will:

- Provide strategic leadership for the Cancer Research Program in alignment with WE-SPARK's mission and priorities;
- Identify emerging opportunities for research growth, collaboration, and impact;
- Develop and implement an action plan to advance program goals and priorities;
- Foster engagement and collaboration among researchers, clinicians, trainees, PWLLE, and community partners;
- Advance research excellence, mentorship, and capacity building across the cancer research community;
- Champion and lead the development of major multi-investigator grant applications, including CIHR, to increase research capacity, competitiveness, and funding success across the Cancer Research Program;
- Represent and promote the strengths of the WE-SPARK cancer research community at regional, provincial, national, and international forums; and,
- Help position the Cancer Research Program for long-term sustainability, growth, and impact.

This role is focused on advancing the collective goals of the program through strategic leadership, collaborative initiatives, mentorship, and the development of competitive multi-investigator funding opportunities that strengthen the broader cancer research ecosystem, rather than promoting individual research agendas.

The Co-Lead Model

The Cancer Research Program will be **led by two Program Leads**.

To strengthen collaboration and represent the breadth of expertise within the WE-SPARK network, Program Leads must hold primary appointments at **different WE-SPARK partner institutions – one academic and one clinical**. While both Program Leads will be evaluated

using the same selection criteria, applicants should demonstrate how their academic or clinical expertise, networks, experiences, and leadership perspective would contribute to a complementary co-leadership model.

The co-lead model is intentionally designed to:

- Leverage complementary expertise and perspectives
- Strengthen cross-institutional collaboration
- Expand engagement across the research community
- Bringing together different leadership strengths, networks, and expertise
- Create sustainable momentum for program growth
- Enhance opportunities for partnership and funding development

Program Leads are expected to function as true partners, working collaboratively to establish priorities, make decisions, engage stakeholders, and advance a shared vision.

Applicants should demonstrate a commitment to collaborative leadership and a willingness to work closely with a co-lead whose expertise, experiences, and perspectives may differ from their own.

Time Commitment and Participation Expectations

Program Leads are expected to dedicate approximately **5 hours per week** to activities associated with this role. Time commitments may vary throughout the year depending on program priorities, events, partnership opportunities, and strategic initiatives.

Core expectations include:

- Participate in regular meetings with WE-SPARK leadership (approximately bi-weekly)
- Representation on the WE-SPARK Strategic Partnership Committee (approximately 4 meetings annually)
- Collaborate regularly with the co-Lead to advance cancer research priorities and initiatives
- Attend and support key WE-SPARK events, including the WE-SPARK Conference, WE-SPARK After Dark, Cheers to Hope, and Think Tanks
- Serve as ambassadors for the Cancer Research Program and WE-SPARK within their respective organizations and networks

Applicants are encouraged to discuss the anticipated time commitment with their departmental and institutional leadership prior to submitting an application.

Appointment, Resources, and Support

Program Leads will be appointed for an **initial three-year term**, with the opportunity for renewal based on performance, program needs, and available funding. Program Leads

receive strategic direction and oversight from the Strategic Partnership Committee and collaborate with the Director and Assistant Director to support the implementation and coordination of activities that advance the goals of the Cancer Research Program.

Strategic Support

Program Leads will receive:

- Direct access to and strategic collaboration with the WE-SPARK Director to help shape priorities, identify opportunities, and advance key initiatives
- Representation on the WE-SPARK Strategic Partnership Committee, providing opportunities to contribute to institute-wide discussions and strengthen alignment across partner organizations

Research Development Support

Program Leads will have access to support for:

- Building interdisciplinary research teams
- Facilitating collaborations among researchers
- Connecting with external partners and stakeholders
- Advancing large-scale and strategic research initiatives

Administrative and Operational Support

WE-SPARK will provide support for:

- Meeting scheduling and coordination
- Agenda development and outcomes reporting
- Communications and promotion
- Activity tracking and reporting

Community and Knowledge Mobilization Support

Program Leads will be supported in:

- Engaging PWLLE and community partners
- Promoting research achievements
- Supporting knowledge mobilization activities
- Building relationships with people with lived experience

Program Resources

Program Leads will receive:

- Dedicated office space at WE-SPARK, with opportunities for affiliated office space within partner institutions where appropriate

- An annual allocation of **\$25,000 per Program Lead** to support activities that advance the strategic goals, development, and impact of the Cancer Research Program. Examples may include team-building activities, community engagement, grant development, strategic meetings/travel, and personnel support that advances program priorities. Funds must be used to advance the collective goals of the Cancer Research Program.

Funds **may be used** to leverage institutional resources and supports that could enhance program leadership and impact. Depending on institutional policies and approvals, this can include a **teaching/course release/buy out, clinical time release, or research associate/coordinator support**.

Funds **may not be used for** stipends, honoraria, or any other form of personal compensation for Program Leads, this includes direct support for an individual investigator's independent research program.

All expenditures are subject to applicable WE-SPARK and partner institutional policies.

Eligibility

Applicants must:

- Be a registered Core Member of WE-SPARK Health Institute
- Hold a primary appointment at a WE-SPARK partner institution
- Demonstrate a commitment to research excellence, leadership, collaboration and community building

Application Process

Applications must be submitted by an individual applicant. As the Cancer Research Program will be led through a co-lead model, applicants are encouraged to discuss the opportunity with colleagues whose expertise and leadership approach may complement their own and encourage them to submit an application. All applications will be reviewed and evaluated independently. Successful candidates will be selected individually and paired to create a complementary academic-clinical leadership team.

Applicants are encouraged to discuss both the anticipated time commitment and the use of Program Lead funds with their departmental and institutional leadership prior to submitting an application.

Application Requirements

Applicants must submit a single PDF containing all required application materials:

1. Curriculum Vitae
2. Written Application
3. Two Letters of Support
4. A letter of institutional support

1. Curriculum Vitae

Applicants should provide a CV highlighting accomplishments and activities from the past five years, including:

- Research achievements
- Leadership experience
- Strategic or program development activities
- Collaborative initiatives
- Mentorship and trainee development
- Community and stakeholder engagement

2. Written Application

Maximum 6 pages (excluding letters of support).

Section A: Leadership Experience

Describe the unique expertise, networks, experiences, or perspectives you would bring to the Program Lead role.

Please include examples of:

- Strategic leadership, priority setting, and action planning
- Building or leading teams, programs and initiatives
- Mentorship and capacity building
- Managing collaborative initiatives and partnerships

Section B: Strategic Direction for the Cancer Research Program

Describe how you would build on WE-SPARK's established cancer research foundation to advance the Cancer Research Program over the next three years.

Please address:

- Existing strengths and assets that should be leveraged
- Opportunities for growth, collaboration, and impact
- Challenges and gaps that should be addressed
- Opportunities to strengthen the program's regional, provincial, national, and international profile

Section C: Building Momentum

Describe the key priorities you would pursue during your first 12 months as Program Lead.

Consider:

- Researcher engagement

- Partnership development and community engagement
- Research capacity building
- Funding opportunities, including CIHR and other major national grant initiatives.
- Opportunities to elevate the profile of the WE-SPARK cancer research community

Section D: Collaborative Leadership

A defining feature of this role is the co-lead model.

Describe how you would work effectively with a Program Lead from a different institution to build a strong and productive partnership. Please discuss:

- Shared decision-making
- Leveraging complementary strengths
- Managing differing perspectives
- Building trust and accountability
- Driving collective impact

Section E: Maximizing WE-SPARK's Unique Structure

Describe how you would leverage WE-SPARK's resources, partnerships, expertise, and established cancer research community to advance the Cancer Research Program, strengthen collaboration, and accelerate research growth and impact.

3. Letters of Support

Applicants must include two letters of support from individuals who can speak directly to their ability to lead a collaborative research program.

Letters should address:

- Leadership experience
- Strategic thinking
- Mentorship
- Ability to collaborate and work effectively across organizations and disciplines

4. Letter of Institutional Support

Applicants must include a letter of institutional support from the department, program, or institution with which they are primarily affiliated, confirming its support for the applicant's application.

Review Process

Applications will be reviewed by the WE-SPARK Strategic Partnership Committee's Program Leads Sub-committee.

Applications will be assessed based on:

- Leadership experience or demonstrated leadership potential
- Research excellence and/or a strong trajectory for future impact
- Strategic vision
- Commitment to collaboration
- Understanding of the WE-SPARK environment
- Ability to build meaningful partnerships
- Potential to advance the Cancer Research Program and contribute to the growth of WE-SPARK

Submission Information

Submit to: wesparkhealth@uwindsor.ca

Application Deadline: November 16, 2026

Anticipated Appointment Start Date: January 1, 2027

Questions regarding this opportunity may be directed to wesparkhealth@uwindsor.ca

WE-SPARK Health Institute is committed to building an inclusive and collaborative research environment that values diverse perspectives, experiences, and expertise. We encourage applications from individuals who will contribute to the continued growth and success of our research community.

WE-SPARK is grateful for the generous contributions provided by the following WE-SPARK Alliance Organizations to fund the Cancer Research Program Leads.



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