



Program Details

AI-Driven Medicines (AIM)

Background

Conscience is a Canadian non-profit organization focused on transforming how medicines are discovered and developed by leveraging open science and artificial intelligence. By treating drug discovery as a collaborative endeavour, Conscience brings together researchers, industry, funders, and patients to address unmet medical needs where market solutions are limited. The organization is supported by a substantial investment from the Government of Canada through the Strategic Response Fund and works in close partnership with the Structural Genomics Consortium.

About AIM

The AI-driven Medicines (AIM) Program aims to drive transformative research that leverages computational or digital-based methods and tools to address critical, real-world challenges in the discovery and development of accessible and affordable medicines. This initiative focuses on supporting the development of innovative methodologies and tools to accelerate the drug discovery and development pipeline, bridging the gap between advanced computational theory and practical therapeutic applications.

Conscience: What Sets Us Apart

Conscience differentiates itself by promoting open science and stimulating the Canadian economy. To align with this focus, **all applications must involve at least one Canadian SME and demonstrate alignment with our [Guiding Principles](#).**

Our funding model is milestone-driven and reimbursement-based, ensuring financial support is tied to project achievements. Our application process and approach to grant management are highly interactive and collaborative, including during the Letter of Intent (LOI) and proposal phases. Therefore, applicants might receive feedback on



their submissions and may be requested to make changes. We aim to collaborate closely with grantees throughout the project, providing scientific support and working together to address any challenges. Additionally, we foster networking and collaboration opportunities and adhere to an [Open Science Policy](#) to promote shared knowledge and innovation.

Section 1 - Scope

To be considered for support, applicants must propose computational-based approaches, devices, tools or digital health technologies to address critical challenges in areas of unmet medical or technological need, including, but not limited to:

- **Discovery & Translational Science:** Target/Lead identification, biomarker integration (multi-omics, imaging), surrogate endpoint validation, disease pathway elucidation, and disease diagnosis.
- **Manufacturing & Formulation:** Predicting high-yield/green manufacturing processes, cost-optimized synthesis, and developing field-stable formulations.
- **Clinical Development & Trial Optimization:** Patient recruitment/stratification, adaptive trial design, virtual cohorts (Digital Twins, Synthetic Control Arms), and remote monitoring (wearables, RWD analysis).

Section 2 - Funding Structure

The AIM program provides milestone-driven, reimbursement-based funding for a one-year project term, with the possibility of an extension. **We will cover between 10% and 33% of eligible costs for Canadian researchers, academic institutions, and large enterprises, and up to 50% for Canadian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).** The maximum funding per project is 1M CAD\$, though additional funding may be considered if the proposed scope and technical complexity warrant a higher budget.

Successful applicants must secure the remaining project costs through demonstrated matching funds. **Please note that for non-academic applicants, 25% of the total project cost must come from non-Canadian government sources.** It is also important to note that the Strategic Response Fund, which supports the AIM program, operates as a **reimbursement fund** rather than a disbursement fund. This means we do not hold the funds required to reimburse project expenditures directly.



Each quarter, when the Ultimate Recipient (i.e. grantee) submits a claim form to our team, we will review and prepare it for submission to the Government for analysis. Funding will be provided to Conscience only after Government approval. Subsequently, we will request invoices from each Project Participant for their respective approved amounts and reimburse the expenses.

Please note that Conscience will charge a 5% admin fee and hold up to 10% of the claim amount from each reimbursement. A detailed guide outlining eligible and ineligible expenses will be provided to applicants selected to submit a full proposal.

Section 3 - Eligibility and Prioritization Criteria

To be considered, applicants must:

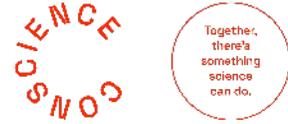
- Propose computational-based approaches, devices, tools or digital health technologies
- Conduct research at Technology Readiness Levels 3-7
- Provide proof of matching funds (see “Funding Structure” section below for details)
- Include at least one Canadian SME
- Clearly demonstrate how the project will directly advance Conscience’s mission in line with our [Guiding Principles](#) and [Open Science Policy](#)

Preference will be given to proposals that:

- Capitalize on open science strategies in line with our Guiding Principles
- Advance Global Health by targeting underserved disease areas
- Ensure Equitable Access by prioritizing the affordability and accessibility of resulting products or services.
- Demonstrate a credible pathway to measurable health or technological impact within 12 months

Section 4 - Application Process

The AIM application process comprises two essential phases: **Letter of Intent (LOI) and Proposal**. To start the process, applicants must answer a few preliminary questions and submit a one-page LOI, which will be reviewed. Those selected will be invited to submit a full Proposal. **Both the LOI and Proposal applications must be submitted via**



our online grants management portal, accessible through the link on our website.

Please note that our review process is interactive, i.e., applicants may receive feedback requesting changes to their application.

The LOI stage is crucial to our evaluation process. **Only LOIs that fit within our scope, meet our eligibility criteria, and demonstrate alignment with our [Guiding Principles](#) will be invited to proceed to the Proposal stage.** Proposals will be evaluated by a panel of scientific reviewers and must clearly define specific, measurable milestones and go/no-go criteria, with decision points occurring no later than four-month intervals.

If the project is selected for funding, applicants are required to sign the grant agreement within the timeframe specified by Conscience and must participate in a mandatory virtual onboarding meeting. Failure to complete either requirement within the specified timeframe will result in withdrawal of the funding offer.

Section 5 - Review Criteria

Our review process is based on the following criteria:

- **Scope & Eligibility Fit:** Is the proposed project within the program's scope? Is a Canadian SME listed as one of the grant recipients? Does the proposed project fall into [technology readiness levels](#) 3-7?
- **Scientific Innovation & Technical Merit:** Does the proposed AI/ML or enabling approach demonstrate novelty and alignment with the identified problem? Are the technical benchmarks and performance metrics clearly defined and appropriate for the scope of the project?
- **Data Strategy & Feasibility:** Are the datasets of high quality and accessible in line with FAIR principles? Is the data strategy sufficient to achieve tangible outcomes within 12 months?
- **Pathway to Impact & Accessibility:** Does the project address a significant unmet need? Is there potential to improve diagnosis, affordability or accessibility of treatments or standard of care? Does the project consider global health impact and scalability or adoptability of the solution?
- **Responsible AI & Data Governance:** Does the project follow ethical frameworks and established standards for data privacy, transparency, and algorithmic bias mitigation? Does it demonstrate commitment to open science?



- **Team Expertise:** Does the team demonstrate expertise suitable for the proposed work? Is the research environment or facility appropriate to support the project?
- **Budget & Matching Funds:** Is the proposed budget aligned with the project's complexity? Are matching funds adequately secured, and are financial and administrative plans appropriate to support project execution?
- **Alignment with Conscience's guiding principles:** Does the applicant demonstrate how the project will directly advance Conscience's mission in line with our [Guiding Principles](#)? Does the application and list of milestones contain an appropriate plan for sharing the data?

Section 6 - Reports and Assessment Criteria

If a grant is awarded, grantees must fulfill the following requirements. The templates for reports will be provided by Conscience:

- **Milestones Report:** These reports must be submitted **every four months** according to the schedule approved by Conscience at the time of awarding. These reports should detail progress on project milestones and address any go/no-go criteria established with Conscience.
- **Output Sharing and Impact Reporting:** Project teams are required to share relevant data and outputs in accordance with an agreed Output Management and Sharing Plan, finalized before grant agreements are signed, and to submit one project success story using the Conscience-provided template.
- **Claims report:** Conscience operates on an annual schedule with **four claim periods, one each quarter**. Ultimate Recipients are responsible for submitting reimbursement claims within 30 days after the end of each claim period. We anticipate receiving payment from the Government approximately 120 days after each claim period ends. Following this, we will request invoices from the Ultimate Recipient and all claiming project participants. Conscience will process and pay these invoices within 15 days of receipt. Additionally, Conscience may request additional documents from the Ultimate Recipient per the audit requirements. Failure to comply with the audit may result in reversal of payments.



Claim Period	Deadline for Reimbursement Claims	Estimated Date of Invoice Request to Project Lead
April 1 to June 30	July 30	October 30
July 1 to September 30	October 30	January 30
October 1 to December 31	January 30	April 30
January 1 to March 31	April 30	July 30

Please note that Conscience's funding is milestone-based. Therefore, if a project fails to meet milestones on schedule or go/no-go experiments result in a no-go decision, Conscience reserves the right to terminate the project. In such instances, reimbursement will only cover costs incurred up to the date of the termination letter. Additionally, grantees must account for all expenditures under the grant. Only costs that align with the approved research project or are incurred with prior approval for changes will be reimbursed. **A detailed guide outlining eligible and ineligible expenses will be provided to applicants selected to submit a full proposal.**

- **Annual Financial Statement:** Each grantee must submit an audited financial statement within six months of the fiscal year end.
- **Invoices:** Grantees must submit all relevant invoices eligible for reimbursement each quarter along with the claims report.
- **Timesheet:** Grantees must submit a timesheet detailing staff hours each quarter in conjunction with the claims report.
- **Events:** Conscience may invite applicants to attend events to present the project's progress. Travel expenses for such events will be reimbursed in accordance with the eligible expenses criteria.
- **Applicant Site Visits:** Conscience may request to visit research sites to observe project progress. These visits are optional, and grantee consent will be sought in advance.

Section 7 - Confidentiality



Conscience will handle all Letters of Intent (LOIs) and proposals with the highest level of confidentiality, implementing reasonable measures to protect this information from unauthorized disclosure to third parties not involved in the grant review process. However, **once projects are awarded, they must comply with our [Open Science Policy](#).**

During the review process, if Conscience or any member of its scientific review panel is required to disclose confidential information due to a legal request, Conscience will inform the applicant as soon as reasonably possible.