



RARE.Qc Grant Program for Collaborative Structuring Projects

2026-2027 Call for Proposals

1. Aim of the Program

The [RARE.Qc](#) Grant Program for Collaborative Structuring Projects supports innovative and collaborative research in rare diseases across Québec by fostering new research directions and strengthening connections within the network. By encouraging interdisciplinary and intersectoral collaborations, the program aims to generate preliminary data that will enable researchers to pursue larger external funding opportunities.

Structuring projects are designed to explore novel hypotheses, assess feasibility, or advance translational and patient-oriented research. Proposed projects must be novel, exploratory, and designed to generate preliminary data. Projects should not already be funded by other sources and should demonstrate clear potential to lead to larger research initiatives.

The objectives of the program are to:

- Promote patient-oriented and clinically impactful research on rare diseases;
- Generate preliminary data to support future funding applications;
- Foster new interdisciplinary and intersectoral collaborations within the RARE.Qc network.

2. Funding

Two (2) projects will be funded under this call, each with a maximum budget of \$50,000. The funding period for each project is 12 months.

3. Eligibility

Applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- The main applicant and co-applicant must be RARE.Qc regular members at the time of application;
- Include at **least two RARE.Qc members proposing a collaborative project** that offers a promising opportunity to improve the health of people living with rare diseases. The application may comprise additional applicants, including partner members.

Priority will be given to:

- Include at least two RARE.Qc members from different institutions.
- Projects involving early-career researchers;
- New collaborations between investigators who have not previously worked together;
- Collaborations spanning different sectors or disciplines;

Note that it is possible to be a co-applicant on more than one application.

Main applicants who received funding for the 2026–2027 year are not eligible to receive funding as main applicants again for applications under the 2027–2028 program.

4. Eligible Expenses

Funds must be used in accordance with latest [FRQ guidelines](#). Eligible expenses include:

- Salaries for research personnel (students and research professionals);
- Research supplies and small equipment;
- Data generation and analysis costs;
- Access to research platforms, databases, or biobanks.
- Awarded amounts are designated for project-specific activities. **Overhead or indirect costs are not covered** in order to maximize support for direct research and program activities.

5. Application Process

Applications must be concise and clearly demonstrate the scientific merit, feasibility, and collaborative nature of the project. Applicants must complete and submit their proposals using the application form provided. The application form must include:

- Project proposal (maximum 1 page). Must include: Rationale, objectives and hypothesis, methodology, and information on the ethical status of the project (if available);
- Budget and justification (maximum ½ page);
- Description of the collaboration, outlining the roles and contributions of each co-applicant (maximum ½ page);
- CVs of principal and co-investigators (FRQ or CIHR format).

7. Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated by members of RARE.Qc's Scientific Committee based on the following criteria:

- **Scientific quality, innovation, and feasibility of the project:** The project must demonstrate strong scientific merit, with innovative hypotheses, methodological approaches, or technologies, and a significant potential impact on rare disease research. Applicants should also commit to making data and other scientific outputs accessible to the broader scientific community whenever possible. Feasibility will be assessed based on the composition and expertise of the team, access to necessary resources and infrastructure, and the realism of the proposed timeline and budget.
- **Strength, novelty, and interdisciplinarity of the collaboration:** The project should involve strong and novel collaborations between researchers. Collaboration between co-investigators from different institutions who have never worked together before is encouraged. Teams are encouraged to be interdisciplinary and intersectoral, integrating expertise from different fields to enhance the project's scientific scope and translational potential. The clarity of roles, complementary skills, and prior experience in collaborative work will be considered in evaluating the team's ability to deliver the proposed project.

- **Potential for future funding and scalability:** Applicants should demonstrate how the project will generate preliminary data or proof-of-concept results that could support larger-scale funding applications. Eligible types include feasibility or proof-of-concept studies, pilot clinical or translational projects, data reuse or integration initiatives, projects leveraging biobanks or omics data, and studies incorporating patient-reported outcomes or patient engagement. The relevance of these data to specific objectives and their usefulness in advancing rare disease research will be key considerations.
- **Training and development:** The project should contribute to the training and development of future scientists, including the direct involvement of at least one student (undergraduate, master's, or PhD) or postdoctoral fellow. Applicants should describe the role of trainees in the project and how the experience will support their scientific growth.
- **Integration of equity, diversity, and inclusion principles:** Applicants should include a brief statement describing how EDI principles are considered in their project. For guidance, applicants may refer to the [FRQ EDI Guidelines 2022](#)

Please note that any application that does not meet the requirements, is incomplete, or is submitted late will be deemed ineligible.

The Scientific Committee will assess the eligibility of all proposals and evaluate them while ensuring that no conflicts of interest occur. The competition will be launched on **April 13, 2026** and the submission deadline will be on **May 19, 2026**. Results will be announced on **June 15, 2026**, and funding is expected to commence on **August 1, 2026**.

8. Recipient Commitments

By accepting this grant, recipients agree to:

- Acknowledge RARE.Qc support, as well as FRQS and Génome Québec, in all publications, presentations, and communications related to the funded project, using the standardized acknowledgment statement provided by the RARE.Qc Executive Committee.
- Present project results at RARE.Qc events, including the biannual RARE.Qc Research Day and/or Summer School events to keep the network informed of progress.
- Contribute to RARE.Qc data-sharing and integration initiatives when applicable, supporting broader network collaboration.
- Submit a final report at the end of the funding period summarizing project outcomes, including publications, conference presentations, and other deliverables. Reports should also highlight contributions to training, the network's impact, sustainable health practices, adherence to open science principles, and how this pilot funding has leveraged further research opportunities.
- Notify the RARE.Qc coordination office of the outcome of any external funding applications related to the project.

In the event that the same project receives full funding from another granting agency during the same application period, the RARE.Qc grant must be declined promptly.