



AURELIA
INITIATIVE
Funding Myeloma Research

Myeloma Canada Aurelia Research Grant Funding Strategy Honouring Innovation. Driving Research. Improving Lives.

Aurelia, meaning *gold* and *light*, reflects a visionary approach to science and research, guiding funding and a commitment towards a life uninterrupted by myeloma.

Myeloma Canada's Aurelia Research Grants (ARGs) fund innovative, patient-centered research that targets the most pressing gaps in diagnosis, treatment, and scientific understanding. We're transforming commitment into impact — improving lives, extending survival, and accelerating progress toward a cure.

Funding Priorities Guided by the Canadian Myeloma Community

ARG funding priorities reflect the top 10 research questions identified by the Canadian myeloma community, including patients, caregivers, and healthcare providers. These priorities were established and [published](#) through a national priority-setting process supported by Myeloma Canada and the Maritime SPOR SUPPORT Unit, using the established methodology of the James Lind Alliance. They are:

1. How can we cure myeloma?
2. Are novel immunotherapies effective for the treatment of myeloma?
3. How can we improve the diagnosis (i.e., faster, less invasive) of myeloma, and what is the impact of earlier diagnosis on patient outcomes?
4. What are new treatments for myeloma patients that will improve life expectancy with fewer adverse side effects?
5. How can we personalize a patient's treatment based on their type of myeloma and genetic profile, and what is the impact of personalized medicine on treatment efficacy and disease outcomes?
6. How can we prevent bone deterioration and/or repair bones that have been damaged without negative side effects or surgery?
7. How can we safely reduce, cycle, or stop the use of medications to reduce the side effects of treatment and maintain control over myeloma?
8. How can we reduce or manage the short- and long-term effects of myeloma treatment?
9. What is the most effective way (i.e., drug combinations, sequence, frequency, and intensity) to treat refractory, relapsed, and drug-resistant myeloma?
10. Can we develop treatments specifically for high-risk or aggressive myeloma that will improve outcomes for these patients?

All funded projects must align with at least one of these patient-driven priorities and demonstrate the potential to improve the lives of Canadians affected by myeloma, whether at the local, provincial, or national level. Projects that meaningfully involve patients in their planning, development, and execution are considered an asset.



Funding Model: Supporting the Research that Matters Most

Myeloma Canada supports high-impact research through funds raised via community initiatives and charitable donations, as well as through strategic partnerships with like-minded organizations.

Research funding is delivered through two primary channels: **competitive project-based grants** and **collaborative partnership grants**.

All funding decisions, whether led by Myeloma Canada or partner organizations, undergo a rigorous, structured review, ranking, and selection process grounded in internationally recognized best practices. This ensures that decisions are fair, unbiased, and transparent.

When Myeloma Canada leads the peer review process, **all applications are evaluated by Myeloma Canada's Independent Research Review Committee (IRRC)**. The IRRC is composed of physicians (including myeloma and other blood cancer specialists), other healthcare professionals (e.g., nurses; pharmacists), scientists, and myeloma patients and caregivers. The IRRC reviews, rates, and ranks proposals based on scientific merit, relevance to ARG funding priorities, feasibility of the proposed approach, degree of innovation, and potential to meaningfully impact patient outcomes. Only the highest-ranking proposals receive funding.

1. Competitive Project-based Grants

Myeloma Canada's competitive grant programs are designed to evolve with emerging scientific needs and opportunities

Aldo Del Col Research Grant

Named in honour of Myeloma Canada's co-founder, the Aldo Del Col Research Grant supports projects that align with at least one of the ARG funding priorities. A call for applications is launched annually, with funding awarded over one or two years — ranging from \$75,000 to \$150,000 each year, and evaluated on an annual basis. Any co-funding or philanthropic partnership opportunities under the Aldo Del Col Research Grant competition must follow the same ARG funding guidelines.

Grants may be awarded in one or more of the following focus areas:

- **Academic cellular therapies** – Advancing the development of Canadian-made, academically developed cell-based treatments for myeloma.
- **Academic off-the-shelf immunotherapies** – Advancing the development of innovative, ready-to-use immunotherapies created by Canadian academic researchers that do not require individual customization.
- **Real-world data and quality-of-life research** – Generating evidence from patient experiences and healthcare data to:
 - Improve access to treatments
 - Inform best practices and standards of care
 - Highlight disparities and inconsistencies in treatment access
 - Speed up policy and clinical adoption of new evidence
 - Fill evidence gaps in myeloma care to improve how treatment is delivered



- **Clinical trial support studies** – Supporting additional research within clinical trials (e.g., quality-of-life, health economics) to:
 - Increase access to promising new treatments
 - Inform clinical practice and how treatments are used in the real world
 - Influence public reimbursement decisions
 - Ensure equitable treatment access for patients across different regions, communities, and backgrounds

2. Collaborative Partnership Grants

In addition to competitive grants, Myeloma Canada supports research through partnerships with other charities, non-profits, institutions, and industry organizations whose goals align with the ARG funding priorities.

Multiple Myeloma March (MMM) Research Fund-Sharing Partnership Program

This program invites charitable organizations affiliated with Canadian myeloma treatment centres or universities to partner with Myeloma Canada on their nearest MMM fundraising event. Qualified partners may receive a research grant up to 50% of the event's net proceeds to support local research projects submitted in collaboration with a myeloma researcher.

Members of Myeloma Canada's IRRC review and rate the submitted projects to determine their degree of relevance to ARG funding priorities. If multiple applications are received for the same MMM event, the IRRC members proceed to rank the proposals using the same criteria applied to competitive project-based grants.

Strategic Industry Partnership Grants

Industry may partner with Myeloma Canada through either competitive project-based grants or strategically commissioned research initiatives. In competitive partnerships led by Myeloma Canada, submitted proposals are reviewed and ranked by the IRRC using the same criteria as other competitive grants. For non-competitive collaborations — such as real-world studies or research projects commissioned through external vendors — Myeloma Canada and the partnering organization ensure scientific integrity, alignment with ARG funding priorities, and appropriate oversight.

Strategic Equally Co-funded Research Grants

Myeloma Canada also participates in equal co-funding partnerships with other charities or non-profits — often with co-members of the Canadian Cancer Research Alliance. These collaborations allow for the joint funding of research projects aligned with shared objectives. Regardless of which partner leads the peer review process, all co-funded projects must follow a rigorous, structured review, and selection process that is based on scientific merit and alignment with ARG funding priorities.

Strategic Philanthropic Research Grants

In certain cases — typically as part of major or planned gifts to Myeloma Canada — donors may suggest their contributions be applied toward specific research areas, researchers or institutions within a particular province, or even a named project or initiative. Donors may also choose to partner on a competitive grant by contributing to its funding while leaving the peer review and selection process fully under Myeloma Canada's governance.



When such opportunities arise, Myeloma Canada collaborates with donor partners to conduct due diligence and identify high-impact initiatives that best align with ARG funding priorities and the donor's intent. Selected projects are reviewed and rated by IRRC members to confirm their scientific merit and alignment with ARG funding priorities.

Progress Reporting: Ensuring Transparency and Accountability

All ARG grant recipients are required to submit progress reports to ensure accountability, track research milestones, and assess project impact. These reports also support transparency with donors, partners, and the broader myeloma community.

Progress Report Schedule and Content:

- **Interim reports (for multi-year projects):** Due yearly or at the mid-point of the funding period. These reports outline key activities, preliminary results, challenges encountered, and adjustments made to timelines or methodology.
- **Final reports (all projects):** Due within 60 days of project completion. Final reports must summarize research outcomes, achievements relative to original objectives, knowledge dissemination efforts, and next steps for future research. Specifically, the final report covers:
 - Summary of objectives and progress to date
 - Changes to the original project plan, timeline, or budget
 - Description of findings and outcomes
 - Community or patient engagement updates (if applicable)
 - Knowledge translation activities (e.g., publications, presentations, policy impact)
 - Plans for future funding or continuation of the work

Myeloma Canada provides a reporting template. Completed reports must be submitted electronically to Myeloma Canada by the deadline specified. Failure to submit timely and complete reports may impact eligibility for future funding opportunities.

IRRC Peer Review Process for Competitive Project-based Research Grant Applications

All competitive project-based research grant applications submitted to Myeloma Canada are reviewed, rated, and ranked by Myeloma Canada's Independent Research Review Committee (IRRC), composed of healthcare professionals, scientists, and myeloma patients and caregivers. This peer review process ensures transparent, unbiased decision-making and reflects the priorities of the myeloma community. Funding decisions follow established best practices, including a structured review and ranking methodology. The IRRC process is supported by Myeloma Canada's CEO and Director of Science & Research **through a two-step review process to assess quality and alignment with ARG funding priorities:**

Step 1: IRRC individual member assessment

Each IRRC member independently reviews and scores submitted research proposals based on the following criteria:

- Relevance to the ARG funding priorities



- Identification of strengths and weaknesses of each proposal
- Overall rating on a scale from 0.0 (lowest) to 4.9 (highest), using weighted evaluation criteria:
 - Novelty of concepts and approaches (25%)
 - Impact of expected outcomes on the field of myeloma (25%)
 - Appropriateness of rationale and design to achieve results (10%)
 - Appropriateness of the research team’s training and experience to achieve results (10%)
 - Suitability of the research environment (10%)
 - Feasibility of proposed timeline (10%)
 - Feasibility and justification of the proposed budget (10%)

Applications with an average weighted rating below 3.5 will not be considered for funding.

Step 2: IRRC peer review meeting

Following individual assessments, the IRRC convenes to:

- Discuss and validate individual assessment results
- Review and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of research proposals
- Reach a consensus score for each proposal
- Determine the final number of grants to be awarded and allocate funding amounts based on proposal rankings and available resources.

IRRC Peer Review Code of Conduct

Confidentiality: IRRC members must maintain strict confidentiality throughout the review process. No information regarding active applications—including content, evaluations, or likelihood of funding—may be shared with applicants or individuals outside the IRRC.

Fairness and Professionalism: IRRC members will exercise professionalism, rigorous judgement, and be impartial, balanced, and reasonable. Constructive reviews that detail strengths/weaknesses of applications are encouraged. Myeloma Canada may request the removal of information that is factually incorrect or comments that could be construed as inflammatory, sarcastic, flippant, arrogant, or inappropriate from the peer review process.

Conflicts of Interest: To ensure that IRRC decisions are fair and objective, all voting IRRC members are required to withdraw from reviewing their own proposals, proposals in which they are involved, or proposals that fall within the same review period.

Transparency: Applicants may request access to all written materials used to evaluate their application. Requests can be emailed to Myeloma Canada’s Director of Science & Research. A list of IRRC members involved in funding decisions will be posted on the appropriate research grant website within 30 days of the funding decision announcement.