

**VSRN**  
Vision Sciences  
Research Network

**FUNDING for RESEARCHERS**  
**PILOT PROJECT FOR EARLY-CAREER**  
**INVESTIGATORS**  
**2024-2025 Competition**  
**INSTRUCTIONS**

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**Deadlines:**                      **Letter of intent:**                      **December 15, 2024\*** (only Sections 1-2-3)  
   **Full application:**                      **February 15<sup>th</sup> 2025\***

\*Should this date fall on a Friday or Saturday, the candidate will have until Sunday night to send the application.

### **Program description and goals**

This program is designated to support early-career investigators and vision rehabilitation professionals actively seeking an independent researcher\* position or who have been in their independent position **for less than 5 years** to launch their independent career in research.

This includes postdoctoral fellows, residents in medicine, associates or research fellows for less than 2 years, optometrists (O.D.) in graduate studies or other vision rehabilitation professionals who will be holding a university position at the time funding is activated.

Only talented and exceptional candidates with a very strong capacity for research in vision health and sciences in Quebec will be supported.

More specifically, this program will:

- Help maintain a critical mass of vision scientists/clinician-scientists in Quebec;
- Attract top international vision scientists to launch their career in Quebec;
- Improve early-stage career advancement;
- Fund pilot projects to provide "proof of concept" or demonstrate feasibility of a project that would then be submitted for funding at other granting agencies.

Preliminary results obtained during this granted period will help the funded researcher to improve their performance and facilitate accessibility to prestigious grants at provincial/federal organizations, private foundation grants, etc. Candidates will benefit from constructive comments of experienced reviewers that will allow them to improve their application and increase their chances of success in other competitions.

A special fund from the "[Fondation des maladies de l'oeil](#)" will be set aside for projects related to its mission. Research projects funded by this foundation must specially focus on eye diseases. You are therefore encouraged to indicate if your research project is related to this foundation as this could allow the funding of additional projects.

*\*Independent researcher, as defined by the FRQS: "Person who has a doctorate or its equivalent and a university affiliation allowing him to supervise graduate and postgraduate students; is autonomous vis-à-vis his research activities; and who occupies a regular professorial or research position at a Québec university or a regular research position in a Québec health and social services institution. Professional diploma holders must have completed a minimum of two years of full-time research training" [Source: "FRQ's Common general rules"](#)*

## Eligibility

The eligibility criteria are as follows:

- The candidate must be a VSRN member or become one when obtaining the grant.
- The candidate must be a postdoctoral fellow, a resident, an optometrist-researcher, vision rehabilitation professional or an early-career investigator (holding an independent position for five (5) years or less (with a status of **assistant professor** or equivalent). The recipient must be a university professor or scientist at a research center/institute when funding is activated. Associate professors are not eligible.
- **IMPORTANT FOR EARLY-CAREER INVESTIGATORS IN TRAINING:** The grant will be activated upon starting your independent position in a research institution in Quebec. The **hiring letter** or contract from a Quebec institution must be provided to the VSRN **no later than 6 months after the date of notification** of the award (special conditions may apply and may be discussed on a case-by-case basis).
- **SPECIAL CONDITION FOR RESIDENTS AND CLINICIAN RESEARCHERS:** They must provide a letter of commitment from the University Department demonstrating that a reasonable amount of time will be reserved for research (50% of the time).
- This competition is open to Canadian citizens, permanent residents and international students wishing to access a position as a researcher or clinician-researcher in vision sciences in Quebec
- The research project should focus on vision sciences.
- The funds granted by the VSRN must be used in a **Quebec institution**.
- Applications submitted late, incomplete or that do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be evaluated.

## Evaluation criteria

The evaluation will be based on criteria of excellence allowing to identify **the candidate AND the project** which will be considered the **most promising**. Criteria are specified at the top of each section of this form.

Three (3) evaluation grids will be used by the jury: [Grid 1 - Trainee](#); [Grid 2 – Early-career investigator \(less than two \(2\) years experience\)](#); and [Grid 3- Early-career investigator \(between two \(2\) and five \(5\) years experience\)](#).

## Amount, duration and grant condition

- The maximum budget for this program is \$100,000 per year (maximum **\$50,000/grant/year**). The VSRN will distribute the funds in order to maximize the impact of the program.
- Financial support is granted for **one (1) year**.
- The competition will be held once a year.
- This grant may be used for start-up funds, laboratory operations, travel expenses, etc.

## Commitment

The recipients commit to:

- Mention support from the “Vision Sciences Research Network” and the “*Fondation des maladies de l’oeil*” (if applicable), in any publication or presentation resulting from the research project funded by the Network;
- Present the research results at the VSRN Annual Meeting;
- Respond to the requests for follow-up sent by the VSRN.

## Scientific report

**Two (2) scientific reports** showing scientific benefits and leverage will have to be submitted: at the end of this grant, and one year after the end of the funding period to allow the VSRN to document the impacts of this program. These reports will be integrally used for the renewal application in the Network Annual Report and Network renewal application (a scientific report could specifically be required for the renewal).

## Financial report

For any funded project, [a financial report](#) must be produced at the end of each financial year (March 31<sup>st</sup>) until the end of the fund's activity period. Details will be communicated to recipients at the appropriate time. As mentioned by the FRQS in their Network Management Guide, at the end of the grant period, the unexpended amounts will have to be returned

## Eligible and ineligible expenses

Applicants must refer to the document produced by the FRQS "[Common general rules](#)" (section 8).

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## How to apply

### – LETTER OF INTENT:

- **Only sections 1- 2 - 3** of the application form " **PILOT PROJECT FOR EARLY-CAREER INVESTIGATOR** " program duly completed (PDF) + [Common CV of the candidate](#) (FRQS format) and including [detailed contributions](#).  
**\*\*\* The Network will confirm your eligibility no later than December 20.**

### – FULL APPLICATION:

The application must be submitted as a **single PDF document including, in the following order:**

- All sections of the " **PILOT PROJECT FOR EARLY-CAREER INVESTIGATOR** " application form duly completed;
- [Common CV of the candidate](#) (FRQS format) and including [detailed contributions](#). A resume containing informations similar to the FRQS common CV will also be allowed.
- Depending on your category:
  - a. **Residents and Clinician Researchers:** A clinical release letter from the university department (50% of the time)
  - b. **Postdoctoral Fellows:** A letter of support from their supervisor
  - c. **Other trainees:** A letter of support from a respondent
  - d. **Researchers (assistant professor):** A letter of support from the chair of the home department

Incomplete and / or non-compliant applications will be rejected.

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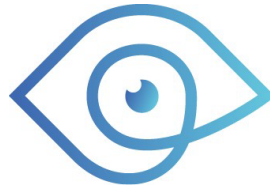
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**To submit your application (PDF) or for additional information (eligibility conditions), please contact:**

Vision Sciences Research Network:  
[reseau.vision@ircm.qc.ca](mailto:reseau.vision@ircm.qc.ca)  
teleworking: 438-825-1425  
[visionnetwork.ca](http://visionnetwork.ca)

Réseau thématique soutenu par le

**Fonds de recherche  
Santé**  
**Québec** 



**VSRN**  
Vision Sciences  
Research Network

**PILOT PROJECT FOR EARLY-CAREER  
INVESTIGATORS**

**2024-2025 Competition**

**APPLICATION FORM**

**Deadlines:** Letter of intent: **December 15, 2024\*** (only Sections 1-2-3)  
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**SECTION 1. IDENTIFICATION**

**Category:**

**Trainee**

Date of entry of this status: \_\_YEAR\_\_ \_\_MONTH\_\_ \_\_DAY\_\_

- Post-Doc
- Resident
- Optometrist trainee

**Supervisor / respondent** (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

**Institute name for the futur faculty position** (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

**Independent position (less than 5 years)**

**Date of entry of the first independent career position:** YEAR\_\_MONTH\_\_DAY\_\_

**Current job title as of today:** \_\_\_\_\_

**LAST NAME, first name and titles:**

**Email:**

**Phone number:**

**Main affiliation:**

**Postal address:**

**Axis (not limited to one check):**

- Biology and Pathology of Vision
- Emerging Technologies
- Vision Neurosciences
- Rehabilitation and Social Issues of Visual Disorders

**Type of research (not limited to one check):**

- Discovery
- Clinical research
- Translational research (pre-clinical research)
- Social sciences
- Politics and public health

**Sectors involved (not limited to one check):**

- Natural sciences and engineering
- Social and human sciences
- Arts and letters
- Health

**Language of correspondence:**

- English       French

**Language in which you will submit your project:**

- English       French

**Is this project focuses on eye diseases?**

- yes       no

**SECTION 2. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATIONS** (if known)

Complete information of the Finance Director or the representative who will manage the grant.

**LAST NAME, First name:**

**Email:**

**Phone number:**

**Institution** (to which the cheque will be payable to):

**Complete address where the cheque must be sent:**  
(civic number, office number, street name, city, postal code)

**SECTION 3. LAYMAN'S SUMMARY** (French and English, **250 words maximum each language**)

Describe, in layman's terms, the goal of the study and impact of this project.

*For the purpose of dissemination and promotion.*

**Titre du projet :**

Résumé:

\* \* \*

**Project's title:**

Summary:

**SECTION 4. RESEARCH EXPERIENCE and LOCATION (2 pages maximum)****• For Trainee**

- Describe the relevance of postdoctoral or professional training for the coveted position
- Scholarships and financial support since the beginning of graduate studies
- Describe the relevance of training sites to this application

**• For Early-career investigator**

- Describe the workplace (common equipment available, lab space available to you)
- Level of interaction / complementarity with on-site researchers
- Training of students or scientific staff (number, level)
- Financial support from other sources (since post-doctorate)

**SECTION 5. OUTREACH and SCIENTIFIC PRODUCTIVITY (1 page maximum)**

Present your most important achievements by highlighting the impact and outreach of your research (e.g. publications, abstracts, patents, participation as a speaker / moderator, member of a recognized granting agency committee, participation in organization of scientific congresses, awards and other distinctions, contribution of research to the methodological development of the discipline, clinical practices and / or health policies, etc.).



**SECTION 6. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED RESEARCH and CAREER PLAN FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS (5 pages maximum)**

*An **appendix** of a **maximum of 2 pages** is also allowed for figures, tables, etc.  
There is no page limit for bibliographic references.*

Describe the **problem**, the **objectives**, the **methodology**, **preliminary results**, **leverage effects**, and the relevance or **project impact**.

**SECTION 7. TIMETABLE, FEASIBILITY and BUDGET (maximum 2 pages)**

Describe the timetable of the main stages of the project and the feasibility.

**Budget:** describe your expenses for the next year (see the FRQS document "[Common general rules](#)", section 8, for eligible expenses).

**OPTIONAL SECTION**

ONLY MANDATORY IF THIS APPLICATION **HAS ALREADY BEEN EVALUATED**  
BY THE “PILOT PROJECT” SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE IN THE PAST

**SECTION 8. REVIEWERS FEEDBACK (1 page maximum)**

Describe and detail the improvements performed in response to the Scientific Committee's recommendations from a previous evaluation.

**Note:** Previous evaluations (up to 2 years) will be forwarded to the Scientific Committee for a similar project previously submitted to the VSRN.