

SPARC Ignite Grant Program

Terms of Reference

Policies regarding the SPARC (Scientists PARTnering for Research with Clinicians) Ignite Grants funded by the McCaig Institute for Bone and Joint Health and partners.

Updated March 2026

1. OVERVIEW

The McCaig Institute for Bone and Joint Health is comprised of basic scientists, orthopedic surgeons, rheumatologists, kinesiologists, biomedical engineers, and health system researchers working together to enhance knowledge of the impact, diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of bone and joint injuries and diseases.

2. PURPOSE OF THE AWARD

SPARC Ignite Grants are intended to foster the development of new collaborations or new research ideas between teams of two or more investigators that include at least one Full or Associate member of the McCaig Institute for Bone and Joint Health. SPARC Ignite Grants are competitive, internal awards intended to facilitate high-risk, high-reward projects or generate pilot data that will develop or strengthen viable collaborations.

3. ELIGIBILITY

- a. To be eligible for a SPARC Ignite Grant, teams must:
 - Consist of at least two individuals (interdisciplinary teams are encouraged)
 - Involve a collaboration between a scientist and a clinician or two individuals from different disciplines
 - Consist of at least one McCaig Institute member (Associate or Full)
- b. The research activity must be related to bone and joint health at the University of Calgary.
- c. Principal Applicants are eligible to be on two concurrent SPARC Ignite Grants. The same team may submit only one application per SPARC Ignite competition.
- d. Previously successful applicants may submit a new application in subsequent years, under the condition that they have submitted a progress or final report by the deadline provided.
- e. Applications developed and submitted by attendees at the SPARC event will be strongly preferred.

4. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

- a. SPARC Ignite Grants may only be used for operational research support (e.g., salaries, stipend, materials and supplies, services) and may not be used for travel, relocation or other purposes.
- b. Successful applicants will be awarded up to \$20,000 CAD that can be used as identified in criteria 4(a) above, as well as put towards accessing the MoJo facilities (infrastructure purchased with CFI funds) or the Biomechanics lab.
- c. The term of support is 24 months (2 year) with potential to extend the term for one additional year (with no additional funds).
- d. Successful applications will have access to the full amount of the award.
- e. Upon completion of the research project, all unused funds will be returned to the Institute and used to support future SPARC Ignite Grant projects.

5. PROCEDURES

- a. SPARC Ignite Grants will be administered annually to fund as many quality teams as the budget will allow.
- b. Application Submission Deadlines: Applications are due by 5pm local time of the deadline date (or per special notice). Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted. Successful applicants will be notified within one month of the application deadline.
- c. Term of Support: Successful applicants to the SPARC Ignite Grants will be provided with support for a two-year term (24 months).
- d. Extensions: A one-time no-cost extension may be granted for one year if projects are incomplete and funds remain unexpended. Extension requests must be justified in writing to the Research Committee Chair and emailed to mccaig@ucalgary.ca prior to the end of the support term.
- e. Progress Report: Successful applicants will be required to submit an annual progress report.
- f. Final Report: A final report will be required and reviewed by the review committee at the end of the project.
- g. Evaluation Criteria: In selecting awardees, the SPARC Ignite Grant Review Committee will use the following evaluation criteria:

Weight: 40%	Weight: 20%	Weight: 20%	Weight: 20%	
Idea	Potential Impact	Alignment	Approach	Attendance at SPARC event
Originality, Creativity & New Knowledge Creation	Significance, Importance & Anticipated Advances	Does it meet the purpose of the SPARC Ignite Grants?	Research Methods, Feasibility, Clarity	Participation in the SPARC event is not required to apply to the competition; however,

(out of 5.0)	(out of 5.0)	(out of 5.0)	(out of 5.0)	preference will be given to applicants who attended the event
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h. SPARC Ignite Grant Review Committee: The ranking and final selection of eligible teams will be the responsibility of the SPARC Ignite Grant Review Committee based on the criteria outlined in 5(g) above.

The review committee should be comprised of a mix of membership from disciplines represented by the Institute.

Conflicts of interest will be avoided by ensuring no applicants review their own grants.

i. Application Submission Procedures: Teams seeking funding from the SPARC Ignite Grant program should submit their application to mccaig@ucalgary.ca by the stipulated deadline. Incomplete or late applications will not be considered. Applications must be submitted as a single file.

6. OBLIGATIONS OF AWARD HOLDERS

Awarded teams agree to certain obligations that include, but are not limited to:

- Acknowledgement of the McCaig Institute for Bone and Joint Health in publications, presentations, communications and marketing materials associated with the supported research project
- Timely submission of final reports or no-cost extension request and other documentation, as required
- Provision of biographical sketches to be used for reporting and publicity purposes upon request
- Participation on the SPARC Ignite Grant Review Committee if requested

Approved and adopted on March 19, 2026