SECTOR INNOVATION PROGRAM
Intake 9 Information Sheet
Women's Health

This document outlines details for the ninth intake of the Sector Innovation Program (SIP9): the research focus, intake-specific parameters eligibility criteria, and the competition timelines. Note that this document is a supplement to the *Sector Innovation Program – Program Guidelines*. Unless specified otherwise, the program parameters, eligibility and evaluation criteria indicated in the Program Guidelines apply.

I. INTAKE FOCUS

The focus of SIP9 is to support genomics[1] research to advance women's health and wellbeing across the life course. Despite women comprising 51% of the Canadian population, only 7% of national research funding over the past 15 years has focused on women's health (Canada, 2024; Gravelsins, 2025). This underinvestment reflects a broader global pattern in which conditions that primarily affect women have been historically under-researched and under-funded.

Genomics offers powerful tools to help close this gap. In this program, the definition of "women" is intentionally inclusive and refers to cis women and gender diverse people who were assigned female at birth. This ensures SIP9 reflects the diversity of those whose health needs have been overlooked in both research and care.

Research Areas

Through this competition, Genome BC aims to support projects related to the following key research areas:

- Conditions that primarily affect people with female reproductive anatomy or physiology: These include conditions that are persistently under-resourced in research. Examples include polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS), endometriosis, gynecological cancers, maternal and perinatal health conditions such as gestational diseases, and health issues associated with perimenopause and menopause. These conditions may also affect transgender men and non-binary people; proposals should reflect inclusive approaches where relevant.
- Conditions that disproportionately affect women: There are diseases that occur more frequently in women or have higher burden in women than in men. Examples include Alzheimer's disease, autoimmune diseases, osteoporosis and chronic pain conditions.
- Conditions where sex- and gender-specific impacts on women have been under-researched: For many common conditions, there is limited sex- and gender- disaggregated data, resulting in an incomplete understanding of how these diseases affect women. Collecting and analyzing sex-specific genomic data can help clarify disease burden and improve women's health outcomes. Examples include cardiovascular disease, diabetes and aspects of mental health and social wellbeing.

[1] Genomics is the comprehensive study, using high-throughput, cutting-edge technologies, of the genetic information of a cell or an organism. For this funding call, Genome BC includes the function of specific genes, gene clusters, their interactions with each other or the surrounding environment as well as regulation. Related disciplines, such as epigenomics, metabolomics, proteomics, transcriptomics, lipidomics, metagenomics, and bioinformatics, as they relate to the functional and structural analysis of genomes, gene regulation, and the interaction of genetic factors with environmental elements are eligible.

Genomics & Society (G&S) Aspects

Researchers must integrate at least one focused activity addressing the ethical, economic, legal, or social implications of their work, selecting a strategic focus tailored to their project's maturity. For discovery stage research, projects should focus on the foundations of responsible innovation as outlined by Matthews *et al.* (2021). Conversely, translational stage projects should prioritize local application and system readiness, such as focusing on clinical implementation roadmaps, economic cost-benefit analyses to justify provincial health funding, or policy recommendations for the equitable integration of genomic tools into standard care. By exploring these broader impacts, the program ensures that genomic advancements are not only technically robust but also socially responsible and ready for application across British Columbia's diverse populations.

Projects that involve or impact Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, Urban Indigenous, and/or Inuit) communities are required to adhere to the First Nations Principles of OCAP®, CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance, Principles of Ethical Métis Research, and Guidelines for Research Involving Inuit, as applicable. Teams will need to indicate how these principles are being upheld, for example, by demonstrating relevant cultural training, including an Indigenous advisory committee, or providing evidence of partnerships with Indigenous organizations or peoples (*e.g.*, a letter of support).

All projects are expected to adhere to Genome BC's Data Management and Sharing Policy.

Some examples of eligible research can be found in **Appendix I** at the end of this document.

II. INTAKE-SPECIFIC PARAMETERS AND CRITERIA

The funding envelope for this intake is $2.3M. The intake-specific parameters and criteria are indicated below. Note that the eligibility and evaluation criteria outlined in the *Sector Innovation Program – Program Guidelines* apply.

1) Project budgets must be in the range of $300K to $460K.
2) Project terms must be in the range of 12 to 24 months.
3) Projects must include a G&S research activity that is integrated with the overall research aims.
    a. It is recommended that this activity represents approximately 15-25% of the total project budget, depending on the maturity of the research.
    b. This activity should be led by a Project Co-Leader/Co-applicant with the relevant expertise.

This program is intended to support projects from discovery to implementation and encourage research that employs interdisciplinary approaches. To that end, projects that bring together health researchers, geneticists, social scientists, clinicians, people with lived experience and other relevant method specialists are encouraged.

Awarded projects will be eligible to receive additional in-kind funding support through the Women's Health Research Institute for Knowledge Mobilization activities. The details of this support can be found in the application form.

Please check the SIP webpage for the *Sector Innovation Program – Program Guidelines* and other details. Contact sip@genomebc.ca with any questions.

III. INTAKE TIMELINE

Date	Activity
April 21, 2026	Launch of SIP-Intake 9
June 17, 2026	Proposal Submission Deadline
October 2, 2026	Notification of Results
January 1, 2027	Anticipated Project Start Date

APPENDIX I. EXAMPLES OF ELIGIBLE RESEARCH

Below are examples of eligible research to demonstrate the breadth of this intake.

- Developing diagnostic methods for polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS).
- Applying metabolomic profiling to assess treatment efficacy in endometriosis.
- Evaluating the impact of sex hormone variation on chronic pain.
- Assessing the utility of whole-genome sequencing (WGS) in recurrent pregnancy loss.
- Investigating the role of vaginal microbiome in the development of endometrial cancer.
- Identifying genetic contributors to higher rates of fatal heart attacks in women.
- Characterizing sex-specific differences in the blood proteome following stroke.
- Leveraging of proteome biomarkers of traumatic brain injury to improve diagnosis in victims of domestic violence.
- Integrating multi-omics data using machine learning to advance understanding of Alzheimer's disease pathology in women or to identify endotypes of PCOS or to predict health outcomes.
- Training Deep Learning (DL) models on blood-based transcriptomic (cfRNA) or metabolomic (serum microRNA) signatures to distinguish endometriosis from other pelvic pain conditions.
- Using AI to identify and prioritize novel molecular targets or repurpose existing regulatory-approved drugs.
- Developing AI-based dashboard that integrates genomic risk scores for breast cancer with clinical metadata, providing a "probability explanation" to help oncologists personalize screening intervals.

Below are examples of G&S research activities that could be integrated in the research project:

- Investigating acceptance of new technology by public, clinicians and/or healthcare system decision-makers.
- Engagement of relevant populations to inform genomic testing design or deployment.
- Establishing governance frameworks for Indigenous data sovereignty and cultural safety in the collection and storage of genomic samples.
- Investigating how to categorize symptoms in genomic databases to better reflect the lived experiences of diverse or marginalized populations.
- Quantifying the societal cost-savings or healthcare system value of early intervention using genomics versus traditional diagnostic delays.
- Drafting evidence-based guidelines for health authorities to support the fair and ethical integration of genomic tools into standard care.
- Creating culturally safe, plain-language tools to help patients and providers navigate complex genomic results in a clinical setting.

REFERENCES

Matthews, M., Rice, F., and Quan, T. (2021, January). *Responsible Innovation in Canada and Beyond: Understanding and Improving the Social Impacts of Technology*. Information and Communications Technology Council. Canada. ictcreportsocialimpactprint.pdf

Statistics Canada. (2024, September). *Canada at a Glance 2023: Women and girls*. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/12-581-x/2023001/sec7-eng.htm

Gravelsins, L. (2025). Women's health research funding in Canada across 15 years suggests low funding levels with a narrow focus. *Biology of Sex Differences*.