



Ministry of
Health



News Release

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Grand Challenges Canada, Maria Cecilia Souto Vidigal Foundation, Bernard van Leer Foundation and Grand Challenges Brazil Initiative of Brazil Ministry of Health join forces to save kids' brains in Brazil

Toronto, Canada and São Paulo, Brazil - Grand Challenges Canada, funded by the Government of Canada, and the Maria Cecília Souto Vidigal Foundation are announcing an agreement to support innovation in early child development in Brazil. This new partnership is in association with Grand Challenges Brazil, an initiative of the Brazil Ministry of Health. It is strengthened by the support of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, an international pioneer for integrated innovations, addressing multiple aspects of young children's needs.

Globally, as many as 200 million children fail to reach their full potential due to experiences such as malnutrition, infection, birth complications, exposure to violence, or a lack of nurturing and stimulation at an early age. The Saving Brains program aims to develop and scale up products, services and policies that protect and nurture early brain development in a sustainable manner, unlocking the potential of the next generation of children and providing their countries with an exit strategy from poverty.

To date, Grand Challenges Canada has extended almost \$30 million to 40 "Saving Brains" projects worldwide. Our current request for proposals is expected to result in another \$6 million for bold ideas with big impact. Today's announcement will allow Brazilian innovators to participate in the [request for proposals](#). The initiative is in support of the Canada-Brazil Framework Agreement on Science, Technology and Innovation, signed in 2008.

Emerging economies like Brazil, where 16 million households have children under the age of six, realize that early childhood development is a key social determinant of health. Many initiatives have been taken to remove obstacles to the development of Brazilian children in the first years of their life. Combining the resources of Grand Challenges Canada and the Maria Cecília Souto Vidigal Foundation will promote an innovative and integrated approach to improve the lives of children in their earliest days.

"There is no grander challenge than child development. We are thrilled to be working with Maria Cecília Souto Vidigal Foundation and the Grand Challenges Brazil initiative of the Brazil Ministry of Health, to support Brazilian innovators with bold ideas for helping children reach their full potential," says Dr. Peter A. Singer, CEO of Grand Challenges Canada.

“As a Brazilian Family foundation, it is our role to create new opportunities for innovators of our country. We believe that this partnership with Grand Challenges Canada fulfills this mission, and we hope to support many projects that will change the reality of early childhood development in Brazil,” says Eduardo de Campos Queiroz, CEO of the Maria Cecília Souto Vidigal Foundation.

“The Grand Challenges Brazil initiative has recently funded grants on pre-term birth and will continue to support research and innovation for the healthy development of Brazilian children. In this context, partnering with Grand Challenges Canada and the Maria Cecília Souto Vidigal will spur creative solutions for “Saving Brains” a program designed to develop the full potential of our children,” says Antonio C. Campos de Carvalho, Director of the Department of Science and Technology of the Secretariat of Science, Technology and Strategic Products of the Brazilian Health Ministry.

“Brazil is poised to be a global leader on early childhood development. We are proud to support Grand Challenges Brazil, with the Brazil Ministry of Health, Grand Challenges Canada and the Maria Cecília Souto Vidigal Foundation. This promising initiative can help Brazil’s youngest citizens reach their full potential”, says Lisa Jordan, Director of the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

For more information, visit grandchallenges.ca or fmcsv.org.br

About Grand Challenges Canada

Grand Challenges Canada is dedicated to supporting Bold Ideas with Big Impact™ in global health. We are funded by the Government of Canada through the Development Innovation Fund announced in the 2008 Federal Budget. We fund innovators in low- and middle-income countries and Canada. Grand Challenges Canada works with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), and other global health foundations and organizations to find sustainable, long-term solutions through Integrated Innovation – bold ideas which integrate science, technology, social and business innovation. Grand Challenges Canada is hosted at the Sandra Rotman Centre.
www.grandchallenges.ca

About Maria Cecília Souto Vidigal Foundation

Maria Cecília Souto Vidigal Foundation (FMCSV) is a Brazilian family foundation dedicated to promoting early childhood development. We generate and disseminate knowledge to professionals dedicated to early childhood and also to managers who have a role in shaping public policies. FMCSV adopts three main strategic lines: (1) Intervention projects: to improve the quality of services provided to pregnant women and children up to age six. (2) Articulation projects: to maximize the impact of initiatives thru partnerships. (3) Knowledge management projects: to leverage society awareness about early childhood development.
www.fmcsv.org.br

About Bernard van Leer Foundation

The Bernard van Leer Foundation (BVLf) is a private foundation based in the Netherlands. It operates internationally, investing its knowledge and resources to ensure all children can develop to their full potential. For over 64 years BVLf has contributed to child friendly national policies, increased public and private investment in young children, and the provision of direct community services that have benefited millions of families. Presently BVLf focuses on three strategic goals: (1) Taking quality early learning to scale (2) Reducing violence in young children’s lives and (3) Improving young children’s health by changing the conditions in which they live.
www.bernardvanleer.org

About Grand Challenges Brazil

The Brazilian Ministry of Health and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation have formed a strategic alliance around shared priorities, including vaccines, agricultural development, maternal and child health, and infectious disease control. As part of this alliance, the partners have created Grand Challenges Brazil to support health research and innovation. The first initiative in Grand Challenges Brazil was to launch a grant program in ‘Reducing the Burden of Preterm Birth’. This program was designed as a research arm of Brazil’s “Stork Network” initiative, a network designed to deliver health care during pregnancy.

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