

Chan Zuckerberg Initiative

Neurodegeneration Challenge Network Collaborative Pairs Pilot Project Awards

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

We have created this document to answer frequently asked questions. Many of these issues are addressed in the RFA materials ([announcement](#) and [instructions](#)) and we would encourage you to read those materials carefully. Please contact us at sciencegrants@chanzuckerberg.com with any questions.

ELIGIBILITY

Does “independent faculty appointment” mean tenure track?

Not necessarily. Tenure track is just one example of independence. Independence is typically demonstrated by a full-time faculty appointment, a tenure-track position, allocated space, and start-up package. Please refer to the section on Eligibility in the RFA materials. Your institution ultimately will determine whether you meet the criteria for independence and we'd encourage you to check with your institution about your eligibility. For more specific questions about eligibility, contact sciencegrants@chanzuckerberg.com.

Do I need an independent faculty position at the time of application or could I provide a letter from my department chair stating that I have a position starting on a future date?

All eligibility criteria, including an independent faculty position or equivalent, must be met at the time of application.

The RFA eligibility requirements state that applications can be submitted by non-profit organizations but that an independent faculty appointment is required. Can you clarify what types of applicants from non-profit organizations are eligible?

Applicants should be research investigators with independent roles either as faculty or the equivalent. Research investigators at a non-profit where the investigators have an academic affiliation are eligible or research investigators at a non-profit that have a role that is of

equivalent level to a faculty or group leader position are also eligible. Non-research staff would not be eligible as a principal investigator on the application, but could participate as part of a research team.

I'm a clinician. Can I apply as a part of a collaborating pair?

Absolutely! Clinicians and clinician-scientists are a critical part of the Challenge Network and we welcome your contributions. Please note that both PIs must meet the criteria of having an independent faculty position or equivalent.

Can post-docs or fellows apply?

Investigators must have an independent faculty position or equivalent, and one member of the collaborating pair needs to be early or mid-career. Students, postdocs, fellows and staff scientists are an important part of the Challenge Network and we welcome their participation on these projects, but the application needs to be led by an investigator in an independent faculty appointment.

How does CZI define early and mid-career status?

The CZI criteria for early and mid-career is for early career, 0-6 years in a first academic appointment; and for midcareer, 6-10 years since first academic appointment. Note that this time window reflects timing at the time of application. Your institution can help you determine whether you qualify as early or mid-career. For specific questions about eligibility, please contact sciencegrants@chanzuckerberg.com.

I'm outside of the window you define for early and mid-career. Can I still apply?

Senior investigators are definitely encouraged to apply. We welcome your experience, expertise and perspective in the Challenge Network. However, you will be required to pair with an early or mid-career collaborator.

Is this RFA open to international applications? How many international projects will be supported?

International applicants are welcome and encouraged, provided they meet other eligibility criteria. We don't have a predetermined number of international applications we will fund. Funding decisions will be made on the quality and potential impact of the proposal, independent of the geographic location of the investigators.

Does the team need to be from the same institution?

Teams do not need to be from the same institution or geographic location.

Can institutions submit more than one application?

Yes. There may be more than one application from each institution for each RFA. However, each eligible investigator may only apply as part of one application.

I have a collaborator in mind, but I'm not sure if we qualify as a "new collaboration".

The RFA is designed to motivate and support new pairs of collaborators to work together on a project. It is OK if you have worked together, but the RFA does require that the team have not received significant funding together previously. Small amounts of institutional seed funding are OK. The application asks you to describe your motivations for the collaboration, including any history of work together. If you have specific questions about the eligibility of your collaborative pairing, contact sciencegrants@chanzuckerberg.com.

I'm funded/have been funded by CZI, can I apply?

This depends on the CZI grant.

If you have applied for the recent CZI Single-Cell Analysis of Inflammation RFA (application period open from 9/17/19 to 11/19/19), you can apply for Collaborative Pairs, provided that the team members and scope of work for both applications are non-overlapping. For instance, you cannot apply together with someone who is also your collaborator on an application for the Inflammation RFA or who has submitted (either with you or with other collaborators) a proposal of overlapping scope to the Inflammation RFA.

Current investigators funded by the Neurodegeneration Challenge Network are not eligible for the Collaborative Pairs RFA. However, we look forward to collaborations developing between the Collaborative Pairs pilot project teams and the current Challenge Network investigators.

If you are/have been funded via other CZI grant mechanisms, you are eligible to apply for this RFA, provided that both the team members and scope of work for the grants/applications are distinct.

APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

Is it really true that no experience in neurodegeneration and no preliminary data is required? Does that mean that if I currently work in the neurodegeneration field, I'm not eligible or that I would not be a strong candidate? Would a team where both PIs are new entrants (no neurodegeneration experience) be competitive?

This RFA is designed to catalyze new collaborations and motivate innovative, out-of-the-box ideas. We are looking for pairs of investigators who bring complementary skill sets to the project, but we do not have preset views on what these pairings will look like. We welcome BOTH applicants who have expertise in neurodegeneration and those who are new to the field but bring other expertise. The RFA is aimed to motivate and support innovative new ideas and approaches, whether they come from researchers who are currently working in neurodegeneration or those that are new to the field. Of course, we expect that applicants (whether bringing experience in the neurodegeneration field or new to the field) take an informed approach to knowledge in the field. The proposal should frame your ideas and your plans for execution, how this project has the potential to advance a critical question related to neurodegenerative disease, and why you are the right team to successfully pursue this work.

Will applications from two junior investigators require additional senior PI support/letters?

No. We do not require additional support letters as part of the application process at this time.

Can I upload additional biosketches of others involved in my project (not a co-PI) or support letters?

No. The application does not allow for additional uploads.

The instructions mention that institutional/sign-off is required. What is the process for this?

Your institution needs to provide approval for the application, through [this form](#). You will upload this form as a PDF with your application. This form should be printed, reviewed, and signed by a person authorized to sign on behalf of your organization, agreeing to the stated institutional and investigator requirements and commitments on data, resource sharing and publication policies, as well as endorsing/verifying your application materials.

What if my institution has questions about the terms and conditions on the Institutional Approval Form?

The policies listed in the Institutional Approval Form represent the values of CZI and give insight into the concepts that the future grant agreement will address. If selected for funding, the official award would come from Silicon Valley Community Foundation and they would issue a grant agreement, at which time, limited negotiation of terms would be possible. Please make any notes of concerns on the Form as well as the need for discussion of terms and then sign/upload the Form in the application portal.

How will these applications be reviewed and grant awards determined?

Applications will be reviewed by internal CZI scientific program staff and external expert reviewers. Final decisions will be made by CZI staff in consultation with our scientific advisors. For guidelines on review and selection criteria, please refer to the RFA instructions and documentation online.

How do I upload my budget?

A budget is not required at the time of submission.

SCOPE

How does CZI define neurodegenerative disease? I noticed that many of the current CZI NDCN Investigators work on Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, ALS; is there a preference for proposals that address these diseases? Can the proposal address a specific disease? Is this RFA limited to studies of neurodegeneration in the brain?

We take a broad view of neurodegeneration as a broad class of disorders, spanning the lifespan from childhood to old-age, of varied mechanisms and pathobiology. We also encourage a

broader, more holistic view of neurodegenerative diseases as diseases that don't just impact the brain and neurons, but as whole-body disorders that involve a broad range of cellular, systems and metabolic processes. We encourage applications that address any of the wide range of neurodegenerative conditions and mechanistic questions, with a preference for proposals that address questions and take approaches that have the potential for broad impact and relevance for multiple diseases. Learn more about CZI's view on these issues and our approach to the Neurodegeneration Challenge Network in this [Medium post](#).

Can I get some advance feedback from CZI on my proposal?

To be fair to all applicants, while we are glad to provide general guidance on eligibility, scope and application logistics, we are not able to offer feedback on specific proposals or ideas in advance of submission. As emphasized in the RFA materials and the webinar, we are looking for bold, innovative ideas and high risk/high impact projects and strongly encourage applicants to think creatively and ambitiously.

What does CZI mean by “open science values and principles”? What will this mean for me, if I receive an award?

To accelerate scientific discovery and collaboration, we support a consent, sharing, and publication policy for open and rapid dissemination of research results and tools and a policy for software development that maximizes accessibility, reuse, and shared development. We see this as important for moving the field forward faster, by allowing others to build on and benefit from the work that will be done by the Neurodegeneration Challenge Network. What this means for you is that, as part of the Neurodegeneration Challenge Network, we will expect you to make your data, publications, methods, and reagents publicly available as rapidly as reasonably possible. For proposals involving human tissues, samples, or data, these should be fully consented to permit sharing. You can find more detailed information on our open science policies in the RFA materials and on our website.

Are biological studies with human tissues (patient studies, patient tissues) acceptable within this RFA?

Yes, as noted in the section of the RFA materials addressing the scientific scope of this RFA, potential areas within scope for this RFA include: *Probing disease mechanisms in human cells, tissues, and models; foundational studies that rigorously bridge between model systems approaches and human biology and disease pathology.*

This RFA is specifically aimed for projects that have potential implications for human disease biology. We also recognize the importance of model systems and in particular, work in mice and other animal models, for mechanistic discovery science. We are open to model systems-focused approaches as well, but encourage applicants to consider approaches that allow for cross-validation in human-relevant models (whether cells, tissues or other data sets and approaches).

Will this RFA be issued again?

We don't know yet. Decisions on future RFAs will depend on our experience and success with this round.

Can the funding be transferred to another institution?

Yes, the funding can be transferred, provided that the new institution also meets eligibility criteria.

How many grants do you expect to fund?

We anticipate awarding up to 30 grants in the pilot phase. Final determination of award and numbers will depend on the quality of the applications received and are at CZI's sole discretion.

Other questions?

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