THE MICHAEL J. FOX FOUNDATION
FOR PARKINSON'S RESEARCH

Parkinson's Disease Biomarker Innovation and Advancement Program

Request for Applications

Fast Facts

- Funding to map and measure Parkinson's disease biology and translate priority fluid- and imaging-based biomarkers into validated, fit-for-purpose tools accessible to the broader PD research community.
- Open to biotechnology, biopharma, diagnostic, imaging, and other eligible life science companies; Contract Research Organizations (CROs); and partnerships between academic labs and commercial assay platform providers with a clear path to commercialization and/or broader research community access.
- For academic or nonprofit-led applications, the commercial assay platform provider must have a substantive role and demonstrated infrastructure, ability, and commitment to support reproducible use beyond the originating academic laboratory.
- Applicants are responsible for securing access to all required samples and submitting requests to the appropriate biospecimen committees during the **pre-proposal** stage.
- Open to eligible U.S. and non-U.S. organizations.
- Pre-proposals are accepted on a rolling basis, with an initial scope-alignment review decision and potential full proposal invitation targeted within approximately three weeks.
- Projects may request support for up to 24 months with funding amount contingent on program scope and development stage.



BACKGROUND

Parkinson's disease (PD) affects nearly 1 million people in the United States and more than 6 million worldwide, with these numbers expected to rise over the coming decades. PD is a progressive and biologically heterogeneous neurodegenerative disorder. Differences in underlying biology, progression, symptoms, and treatment response can complicate participant selection, endpoint selection, and interpretation of therapeutic response.

Although understanding of PD continues to advance, no currently approved treatment has been shown to slow or stop disease progression.

Biomarkers can help define disease biology, identify appropriate trial participants, measure progression or target engagement, and strengthen clinical development decisions. The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research (MJFF) seeks to accelerate the development and broad availability of robust, reproducible biomarker tools that can support these uses for ongoing and future clinical trials for PD.



PROGRAM GOAL

Promising fluid and imaging measures are emerging that can detect and quantify Parkinson's disease biology, and several clinical cohorts have already generated substantial data using these technologies. A critical gap remains in translating promising technologies and biological signals into reliable, accessible tools for defined contexts of use (COUs) in PD clinical trials. Closing this gap requires a concerted effort to determine whether tools capture the intended biology, prioritize the most promising signals, validate performance in relevant PD populations, harmonize methods across sites, and optimize and scale tools for broader use.

The Parkinson's Disease Biomarker Innovation and Advancement Program provides a continuous submission pathway for biotechnology companies, diagnostic companies, imaging companies, biopharma, Contract Research Organizations (CROs), and partnerships between academic labs and commercial assay platform providers to address this gap and advance tools aligned with MJFF priorities. An initial review will assess alignment and help applicants determine whether to develop a full proposal.

Proposals should address one or more of the following priorities and define how the proposed work will advance reliable, accessible, and decision-informing biomarker use:

1. Develop, validate, and scale fit-for-purpose assays and measurement tools as drug development tools: Advance biomarkers with strong biological relevance to PD, neurodegeneration, or specific pathway dysfunction into fit-for-purpose drug development tools. Establish their analytical and clinical performance; standardize and harmonize methods across laboratories, sites, assay platforms, or imaging systems, as appropriate; and optimize the tools for broader implementation. Examples include:

- Developing and Optimizing fluid assays, imaging technologies and analytical methodologies, utilizing independent validation where applicable.

- Scaling an existing biomarker technology by validating across a broad range of biosamples and/or laboratories to accelerate clinical implementation.
- Validating tools for defined contexts of use, such as participant selection or enrichment, target or pathway engagement, disease monitoring, progression, or treatment response.

2. Map and measure PD biology: Support approaches that characterize and measure disease-driving pathways and processes underlying PD and its heterogeneity. These may include fluid and imaging measures, analyte enrichment strategies, discovery-based and targeted approaches to identify promising biomarkers that enable patient enrichment, stratification, and/or evaluation of target engagement. Examples include:

- Measuring disease-driving pathways such as mitochondrial dysfunction, neuroinflammation, and endolysosomal biology.
- Developing or applying targeted biofluid and imaging approaches to detect and quantify alpha-synuclein and other pathological proteins in the brain, CSF, or peripheral matrices.
- Integrating imaging measures with biofluid, genetic and clinical data to better characterize PD biology and heterogeneity.

3. Characterize Clinical Biomarker Signatures: Leverage advanced computational analysis methods and relevant clinical datasets to identify disease signatures, subtypes, and biomarker targets or signals for translation and clinical validation. Projects of this type must demonstrate a clear context of use and prioritize findings based on biological relevance, strength of evidence, and direct utility in PD clinical trial design. Examples include:

- Use existing clinical cohort data and robust analytics to identify disease signatures, subtypes, and measures of disease status, progression, co-pathology, or pathway/ target engagement.
- Identifying biologically or clinically meaningful PD subgroups, prioritizing signals associated with disease-driving pathways or therapeutic mechanisms.
- Integrating biomarker data with clinical, genetic, fluid, and imaging measures.

Projects should address a defined PD question and explain how findings will be prioritized and advanced toward validation or application. Data mining without a clear next step is outside the program's scope.



PROPOSAL PRIORITIES

MJFF will prioritize proposals that:

- Present a differentiated technology, approach, or biomarker signal with preliminary evidence commensurate with the stage of work.
- Describe an appropriate sample selection strategy to enable rigorous validation of the proposed work. Specify the biological fluids, imaging datasets, clinical datasets, etc. that will be utilized in the proposed work.
- Define a relevant context of use and explain how the work could inform PD research or drug development decisions.
- Clearly define a data sharing plan for the proposed project outcomes that describes how data will be distributed openly at the end of the grant in compliance with MJFF's **Open Science Policy**. The plan must identify applicable regulatory requirements and study-specific restrictions (e.g., limits on redistribution) and confirm that no constraints would prevent the resulting data from being shared openly.
- For projects aiming to scale a commercial asset, a defined commercialization strategy must be included in the pre-proposal.
- Include a Parkinson's disease expert with relevant knowledge of PD biomarkers, clinical cohorts, or their application in research and clinical studies.
- Include a capable diagnostic company, CRO, biomarker developer, technology partner, or other qualified collaborator when needed to advance the work.
- Proposals should identify the stage of development being requested and the milestones that would support further development.

Program Exclusions

For this program, MJFF **will not consider** the following proposal types:

- Preclinical-only studies without relevant clinical data included in proposal.
- Projects that lack a clear access plan, or have intellectual property, third-party rights, or restrictive licensing agreements that prevent the intended access.
- Projects that yield fit-for-purpose assays and measurement tools but lack a clear commercialization plan to make tools available to the broader PD research community.

- Medical Technology Projects (i.e. digital technologies, wearables, etc.)

Industry groups evaluating biomarkers within their own clinical trials are outside of the scope of this program and should apply through the MJFF Therapeutics Pipeline Program.



ACCESS, IMPLEMENTATION, AND SCOPE

For projects intended to produce tools for wider use, proposals must explain how and by whom the tool will be made available to academic and industry researchers and, where relevant, clinical trial users. A practical commercialization or distribution pathway should be described, including anticipated timing, access terms, relevant intellectual property, and any third-party materials or licenses that could constrain access. A publication or completion of fee-for-service work alone is not sufficient to establish broad availability.

- In the pre-proposal stage, applicants must indicate whether the developed tool is intended for commercial use.
- **Any proposal aiming to develop, validate, and scale fit-for-purpose assays and measurement tools as drug development tools must have intent to commercialize to be eligible.**
- Supplemental information (i.e. freedom to operate, access timeline, etc.) will be requested in the pre-proposal stage to ensure proper evaluation of the proposal.



ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Applications are accepted from U.S. and non-U.S. organizations with the technical, operational, and quality capabilities required to develop, validate, transfer, and support broad access to the proposed assay.

- Biotechnology, biopharma, diagnostic, and imaging companies; Contract Research Organizations (CROs); and partnerships between academic labs and commercial assay platform providers are eligible to apply.

- Academic or nonprofit groups may only apply when partnered with a committed commercial assay platform provider with defined roles in assay development, validation, QC, technology transfer, or broad assay availability. A CRO representative must be included as a co-investigator on the award.

For academic or nonprofit-led applications, the CRO or industry partner must have a substantive role and demonstrated infrastructure, ability, and commitment to support reproducible use beyond the originating academic laboratory. This includes, where applicable, reliable production and validation; global availability to nonprofit and for-profit researchers; commercially reasonable access; and a simple request or ordering process, with established click-to-order systems preferred where applicable. **Academic-only proposals are not eligible.** The principal investigator must be the primary applicant and take responsibility for the application, project delivery, and correspondence with MJFF.



FUNDING AVAILABLE

Duration: up to 24 months

Award Amount: Funding level and project duration will be determined by the technology's stage, the work required to reach the next decision-enabling milestone, and the availability of other resources. Applicants invited to submit a full proposal may discuss scope and budget with MJFF staff. Budgets should include all direct and indirect costs and follow the current MJFF Application Guidelines.



TIMELINES & REVIEW SCHEDULE

The program uses a **two-stage rolling process** designed to provide a rapid initial assessment of alignment:

- **Rolling pre-proposal.** Applicants may submit a concise pre-proposal at any time through the MJFF Grant Portal. MJFF targets an initial review within three weeks of submission to assess priority, scope, organizational, sample, access, and partnership alignment.

- **Invited full proposal.** Applicants selected for further consideration will be invited to submit a full proposal in the next available review cycle. MJFF staff may request a follow-up call or additional diligence regarding the science, operations, samples, milestones, budget, IP, access, or validation strategy.

Funding decisions are targeted within three months of full proposal submission. Specific full proposal deadlines and decision dates will be communicated to invited applicants. Applicants are encouraged to apply early to allow adequate time to correct errors found during the submission process.

Round	Pre-proposal Submission Period	Full Proposal Due	Funding Decision Announced
Round 1	November 5, 2026 - January 7, 2027	February 18, 2027	May 2027
Round 2	January 8, 2027 - March 11, 2027	April 22, 2027	July 2027
Round 3	March 12, 2027 - May 13, 2027	June 24, 2027	September 2027
Round 4	May 14, 2027 - July 15, 2027	August 26, 2027	November 2027



BIOSAMPLE REQUESTS

Investigators are encouraged to leverage existing tissue and biosample resources whenever appropriate. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that they have access to all samples required to complete the proposed work. This includes identifying the appropriate biospecimen collection, confirming sample availability and eligibility, and submitting any required access applications to the relevant committees during the pre-proposal stage.

Applicants may request access to biospecimens from MJFF-sponsored collections as part of this initiative. **If your project will require MJFF biospecimens, indicate this in the funding application and identify the collection or cohort and the samples needed.** To apply for sample access, review the collection-specific requirements and complete the relevant biosample section of the pre-proposal application online.

Sample-access requests may be reviewed in parallel with funding applications by the committees overseeing the requested collections. Funding review does not guarantee sample access, and sample-access review does not guarantee funding. Please allow sufficient time for both processes. Review MJFF's available collections, inventory, and sample-access information on the **MJFF biorepository website and inventory catalogue.**

Groups seeking access to samples without funding through this initiative should contact resources@michaeljfox.org.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (DEI)

In pursuit of our mission to accelerate the development of better treatments and a cure for Parkinson's disease, MJFF aims to support a rigorous research agenda reflecting a wide and diverse range of perspectives on Parkinson's disease and carried out in diverse populations. Diversity may refer to characteristics including, but not limited to, race, religion, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic circumstance, nationality, geographic background, ability and disability, political ideology and age. Parkinson's is a complex problem; the more angles from which we attack, the greater the chances of finding innovative scientific solutions to benefit everyone living with the disease. As such:

- The Foundation encourages applications from diverse investigators representing groups historically underrepresented in the research enterprise.
- Because research shows that diverse teams outperform homogeneous ones, we urge applicants to share information about the composition of the team that will carry out the funded work.
- Proposed work should seek wherever possible to include relevant diversity, such as inclusion of sex/gender and genetic ancestry in preclinical studies and inclusive recruitment and retention as well as engagement of historically underrepresented groups in clinical studies.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Application Guidelines provide general guidance on applying for funding from MJFF, though the RFA always supersedes information contained in the Application Guidelines.

MJFF has an Open Science Policy which governs research outputs (such as preprints, journal articles, data, code, and software) resulting from MJFF-funded work. This policy includes specific rules, timing, and format for the return of those research outputs and requires them to be shared openly, to be free to access, and with persistent identifiers.

Grantees are required to provide proof of compliance with this policy (i.e., providing a link to the data in an open repository no later than submission of the first journal manuscript based on the data), and future funding will be contingent upon adherence. Please refer to the link above for more detailed information or contact openscience@michaeljfox.org. MJFF requires that the Principal Investigator be the primary applicant (i.e., the person who initiates and takes primary responsibility for the application). All application-related correspondence will be sent to the Principal Investigator.

For questions about the application process or project suitability for this call for applications, please email grants@michaeljfox.org.

Thank you for your interest in collaborating with MJFF and your commitment to the Parkinson's community.