2026 Request for Applications
T2T Mitochondrial and Neuroprotective Target Validation

BACKGROUND

Parkinson's disease (PD) affects nearly 1 million people in the US and over 8 million worldwide, and those numbers are expected to rise over the coming decades. PD is highly heterogeneous: individuals experience a wide array of motor and non-motor symptoms, many of which depend on disease severity and duration. Though our understanding of PD and its causes is growing, many questions remain. There are no drugs available for Parkinson's that alter the progression of the disease, and current symptomatic treatments provide limited relief but come with complications and side effects.

The Michael J. Fox Foundation (MJFF) funds research to better define, measure, and treat Parkinson's disease as well as critical tools and other resources to advance that research. The purpose of this Request for Applications (RFA) is to accelerate validation of high-priority mitochondrial mechanisms and targets (USP30 [and other related de-ubiquitinating enzymes, e.g., USP15], CACNA1D (CaV1.3), NFE2L2 (Nrf2), and PARK7 (DJ-1)) and address critical gaps limiting therapeutic progress in PD. To this end, MJFF believes that promoting coordinated, target-centric and pathway-informed studies will provide the mechanistic and translational evidence needed to advance these targets toward therapeutic development.

PROGRAM GOAL

The T2T Program seeks to build a robust evidence base for mitochondrial and/or neuroprotective targets with high potential relevance to Parkinson's disease. Funding will support projects to clarify human relevance, define mechanism in PD-relevant contexts, establish target engagement, or develop enabling tools and assays.

For this round, MJFF **will not consider** proposals focused on the following:

- Broad discovery without a defined target/mechanism
- Therapeutic development programs not directly tied to target validation

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

The T2T Program supports:

- Target modulation in cell and animal models to determine efficacy on PD phenotypes
- Generate evidence linking target biology to PD patient samples
- Clarifying the therapeutic mechanism of action
- Identify and test biomarkers to aid preclinical therapeutic validation and patient stratification
- Biological safety through animal model characterization

When considering proposals submitted to this program, MJFF prioritizes those that:

- Directly address known target gaps (e.g., human modulation, biomarker linkage, mechanism in alpha-synuclein biology and related PD pathology)
- Generate reproducible, translatable data that advances the target toward a therapeutic decision point

FUNDING AVAILABLE

Duration: 3 to 24 months
Award Amount: Between $250K-$2M. Requested support should be commensurate with work proposed.

These budgets include direct and indirect costs. For academic and for-profit institutions, no more than 15% or 10%, respectively, may go to indirect costs. Additional details about MJFF's indirect cost policy can be found in the Application Guidelines and FAQ.

DEADLINES & REVIEW SCHEDULE

- Pre-proposals due: May 27, 2026, 5 p.m. US ET
- Pre-proposal decisions shared: by end of June 2026
- Prospective applicant presentations (by invite only): July 6th - 24th
- Full Proposals Due (by invite only): September 15, 2026
- Anticipated Award Announcement: November 2026

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Applications may be submitted by researchers or clinicians in:

- U.S. and non-U.S. biotechnology/pharmaceutical companies, or other publicly or privately held for-profit entities; and
- U.S. and non-U.S. public and private non-profit entities, such as universities, colleges, hospitals, laboratories, units of state and local governments and eligible agencies of the federal government.
- Post-doctoral fellows are eligible to apply as co-investigators with the designation of an administrative primary investigator who directs the laboratory in which the fellow will conduct research. The administrative PI will be responsible for assisting in providing all institutional documents required for the project and will be required to sign any award contract. Training or mentoring-only proposals will not be considered.

BIOSAMPLE REQUESTS

Applicants may propose studies designed to assess human relevance of the targets using PD biosamples, including CSF, blood, postmortem tissue, and immune cell preparations. Investigators are encouraged to leverage existing tissue and biosample resources if possible. Studies requesting access to biosamples available through MJFF-sponsored biospecimen and cell line collections are eligible to apply to this initiative. In these cases, access to samples will be reviewed in parallel to funding requests by the committees overseeing the biospecimen collection(s) requested. To review MJFF's available biosample collections, please consult the MJFF biorepository website and biorepository inventory catalogue. Groups requesting access to samples only (without funding) 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.

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.