

FALL 2020 CORE FUNDING PROGRAMS TARGET ADVANCEMENT PROGRAM AN EDMOND J. SAFRA CORE PROGRAM FOR PD RESEARCH

BACKGROUND

Parkinson's disease (PD) affects nearly 1 million people in the US and over 6 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 and 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 leverage and translate basic research, in order to enable therapeutic development. To this end, MJFF believes that promoting target and pathway validation studies within academic and industry laboratories can bridge the critical gap between basic biology and therapeutic development.

DEADLINES & REVIEW SCHEDULE

- Pre-proposals Due: April 23, 2020, 5 p.m. US ET
- Full Proposal Invitations: June 11, 2020
- Full Proposals Due (by invite only): August 11, 2020, 5 p.m. US ET
- Anticipated Award Announcement: November 2020
- Anticipated Funding: December 2020

Applicants are encouraged to apply early to allow adequate time to correct errors found during the submission process.

FUNDING AVAILABLE

Duration: up to 18 months

Award Amount: Up to \$200,000. 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](#).

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.

PROGRAM GOAL

The Target Advancement Program seeks to build conclusive evidence to rationalize biological targets and pathways for Parkinson's disease (PD) therapeutic development. Funding will support projects focused on validating targets and defining pathways implicated in PD pathological processes and/or symptomology. Targets and pathways proposed for study should have a reasonable initial link to PD, such as demonstrated genetic association, altered expression/function of the target in PD-relevant human tissue, and/or prior clinical trial data. When considering validation studies, MJFF prioritizes applications proposing experimental systems and models with high construct validity to hypothesized pathogenic mechanisms in human PD, such as patient-derived material and/or animal models demonstrating dysfunction in the pathway(s) proposed for study.

Please note that MJFF has made significant investments in the biology of high-priority targets, including **alpha-synuclein, LRRK2, GBA and Parkin/PINK1**. Proposals focusing on these targets will be considered on a case-by-case basis and carefully evaluated against the existing MJFF portfolio.

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

Applications should focus on studies that achieve one or more of the following goals:

- Demonstrate pathological relevance of a target by studying its altered expression, distribution, or function in PD-relevant human tissues.
- Demonstrate that modulation of the target or pathway *in vivo* in whole mammalian PD models using genetic or pharmacological manipulations yields outcomes predictive of clinical efficacy or relevance in human PD.
- Elucidate target or pathway biology in disease-relevant models, including defining upstream/downstream modifiers and convergence of promising target pathways.
- Replicate or further validate recently published, high-impact findings in PD biology.

BIOSAMPLE REQUESTS

Applicants may propose studies designed to assess PD targets in pre-clinical models, human cellular models, and human tissue and fluids. 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. Access to samples will not guarantee funding, and funding will not guarantee access to samples. 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.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Our [Application Guidelines](#) provide general guidance about applying for funding from MJFF, though the RFA always supersedes information contained in the Application Guidelines. Please note that MJFF updated our publication and indirect costs policies in early 2020. The new [open access publication policy](#) requires articles resulting from MJFF-funded work publish in a preprint repository then in an open access forum with free and immediate readership rights.

MJFF will host an informational webinar on March 27, 2020, at 12 p.m. ET to clarify and explain the goals of our funding opportunities and answer applicant questions. The webinar will be available to view on-demand after the live airdate. To register, please visit the [Target Advancement Program](#) webpage.