



CHAN
ZUCKERBERG
INITIATIVE

**Request for Applications:
CZI Neurodegeneration Challenge Network**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**[Ben Barres Early Career Acceleration Awards \(ECA\)](#)
and [Collaborative Science Awards \(CS\)](#)**

**Please make sure to read the documentation and instructions for each RFA carefully. The FAQ answers below do not address all issues covered in the instructions.

Can I apply to both the ECA and CS?

No. Each investigator may only apply to (Early Career Acceleration as Principal Investigator) or be part of (Collaborative Science as Principal Investigator or co-PI) one application.

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 to one or be part of one.

Can foreign academic institutions apply?

Yes. Applications may be submitted by domestic and foreign nonprofit organizations; public and private institutions such as colleges, universities, hospitals, laboratories, units of state and local government; and eligible agencies of the federal government. Please be sure to review the RFAs for additional eligibility criteria.

I am a postdoc. Can I apply?

No. For both awards, you must be in an independent faculty position to apply. Independence is typically demonstrated by a full-time faculty appointment, a tenure-track position, allocated space, a start-up package, and institutional commitment as defined or verified in a letter from a department chair or equivalent.

Do I need to be tenure track?

No. For both awards, applicants must be in an independent faculty role to be eligible. However, tenure track is just one example of independence. Independence is typically demonstrated by a full-time faculty appointment, a tenure-track position, allocated space, a start-up package, and institutional commitment as defined or verified in a letter from a department chair or equivalent.

Do I need institutional sign-off to apply?

Yes. For the Early Career Acceleration Award, you need institutional sign-off at the time of application. For the Collaborative Science Award, you only need institutional sign-off for the full application, not at the Letter of Intent stage. However, we encourage all applicants to consult their home institution to determine eligibility to apply for either grant program.

I have a conflict with the dates of the interviews. Can I still apply?

Yes. If you have a conflict with these dates, we ask that you notify us when you apply and in cases where necessary, we may be able to make alternative arrangements. We are aware that the dates overlap with Rosh Hashanah and will make accommodations.

If I am invited for an interview, who will cover my travel costs?

CZI will cover the travel costs of applicants who are invited for an interview as part of either application process.

Is there going to be another round of awards next year?

At this time, we have not yet determined if there will be another round.

How many awards will be given out each year?

There is no expectation of any specific number of awards.

Are nonprofit research institutes / non-academic institutions eligible?

For the Collaborative Science Award, your institution would be able to participate as a subcontracted project, as long as the coordinating PI and coordinating institution on the application meet the eligibility requirements.

Can I be a collaborator on an application where I am not a PI or co-PI?

We are very supportive of collaborative science. Although an investigator can only be a PI or co-PI on one application, PIs may engage other collaborators or subcontractors in their project proposals.

I am new to the field of neurodegeneration. I don't have any publications in this field. Will this put my application at a disadvantage?

Our aim for the Neurodegeneration Challenge Network is to attract new talent and ideas to work on neurodegeneration and to recruit cross-over researchers from other fields. The application does not require any previous neurodegeneration work, publications, or preliminary data. A section of the application asks you to list up to five previous papers (or preprints) that you consider relevant to your application. These are intended to demonstrate your background/expertise and do not need to be for neurodegeneration work.

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

We are looking for bold, innovative ideas and high risk/high impact projects and strongly encourage applicants to think creatively and ambitiously. To be fair to all applicants, we are not able to offer feedback on proposals in advance of submission. However, if you have questions about application logistics or general questions about aims/scope of the Neurodegeneration Challenge Network, you can email sciencegrants@chanzuckerberg.com.

Can you clarify what CZI defines as neurodegeneration?

We are defining neurodegenerative diseases broadly, as any diseases that involve a progressive degeneration, loss of function, and death of cells of the nervous system. This would include the major

classes of neurodegenerative disorders like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, Huntington's Disease, ALS, and Multiple Sclerosis as well as scores of other disorders that share common features, especially at the cellular and molecular level. An explicit aim of the Neurodegeneration Challenge Network is to look at neurodegeneration in a more disease cross-cutting way than perhaps has been typical in the field, with an aim to understand common features and mechanisms. As outlined in the RFA description, our focus is on understanding basic biological mechanisms, as opposed to translational targets or clinical application.

The RFA mentions a focus on human biology. Will other model systems be considered?

As noted in the RFA documentation, these RFAs are aimed at foundational and mechanistic studies, with a grounding in human biology and disease pathology. In principle, projects using animal models may fall within this scope, provided that the project can make a case and is tuned towards the overall goals of addressing basic cell biological mechanisms of neurodegeneration in alignment to human disease biology.

The RFA mentions a focus on cell biology. How do you define cell biology and why cell biology?

We define cell biology broadly, to include traditional cell biological and molecular approaches but also a range of area disciplines with a cellular/molecular emphasis, including immunology, metabolism, cellular neuroscience, physiology, genetics, genomics, systems, and computational biology. Recent advances in the field, especially in genetics and genomics, have expanded the view of potential pathways and mechanisms contributing to neurodegenerative diseases, but there are still major gaps in our understanding of these mechanisms and we feel that new interdisciplinary approaches—at the level of cell biology—will bridge the gaps between genes, pathways, and mechanisms, as well as ultimately pave a path forward to treatment and prevention.

I have an idea for a treatment approach / translational strategy / clinical trial. Does this fall within the scope of the RFA?

This RFA is aimed at foundational and mechanistic studies aimed at understanding the underpinnings of neurodegenerative diseases. This is explicitly NOT a translational or clinical development RFA. Nonetheless, successful projects should be grounded in human biology and disease pathology, and the goal is that these efforts will ultimately provide new avenues and rigorous foundations for other translational and clinical development work.

The RFA mentions tool development as a priority for the Neurodegeneration Challenge Network. Does my proposal have to focus on tool / methods development?

This is not specifically a tool/methods development RFA. Successful projects will focus on biological questions and address mechanisms that have broad relevance for neurodegenerative diseases, but tools will also be an important aspect of the evaluation of these proposals. An overall goal of the Neurodegeneration Challenge Network is the development, validation, and dissemination of robust, reliable, and scalable experimental and analytical tools for the broader neurodegeneration community, and as a part of the collective work of the Neurodegeneration Challenge Network, we will ask funded investigators to contribute to these efforts. We define “tools and resource” development broadly, including both experimental and computational tools and platforms, disease models, new methods, benchmark datasets, and other approaches that will enable researchers to rigorously address critical questions in the field.

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. If you need an exception to these policies, it should be clearly stated at the time of application. Please see RFA Policies section in the RFA documentation for more detailed instructions.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
[Ben Barres Early Career Acceleration Awards \(ECA\)](#)

I started my first independent faculty position just outside of the eligibility window. Can you make an exception on my eligibility?

Unfortunately, no. For the Early Career Acceleration Award, applicants must be in their faculty role for at least two years but not more than six years at the time of application, i.e. have started a first independent position between April 2012 and April 2016. In order to be fair to all, we must adhere to our published criteria in all cases.

I am at an institution where the career tracks are not traditional. I am a lecturer / work in a country where there is no tenure track / am an investigator with my own grants but under a more senior faculty. Am I eligible?

Perhaps. For the Early Career Acceleration Award, you must be in an independent faculty position to apply. Independence is typically demonstrated by a full-time faculty appointment, a tenure-track position, allocated space, a start-up package, and institutional commitment as defined or verified in a letter from a department chair or equivalent. Applicants must also be in their first faculty role for at least two years but not more than six years at the time of application, i.e. have started a first independent position between April 2012 and April 2016. All applications for the Early Career Acceleration Award must receive institutional approval and sign-off.

I am no longer in my “first” role. I moved institutions / was promoted / switched departments. Am I eligible?

For the Early Career Acceleration Award, as long as you started your first independent faculty position between April 2012 and April 2016, you are eligible if you meet all other eligibility criteria. All applications for the Early Career Acceleration Award must receive institutional approval and sign-off.

I had a career break that affects my eligibility due to the “at least two years but not more than six years” definition. Am I eligible?

Perhaps. CZI will make exceptions to the eligibility window for the Early Career Acceleration Award in cases of institutionally approved career breaks. All applications for the Early Career Acceleration Award must receive institutional approval and sign-off.

Why is there a two-year minimum for the Early Career Acceleration Award?

We felt it was important that new investigators have had time to settle into their positions and to get their labs and research programs off the ground, in order to fully benefit from being a part of this Network.

It seems that I am not eligible to apply for the Early Career Acceleration Award. Can I still apply for the Collaborative Science Award?

The eligibility window for the first faculty position only applies to the Early Career Acceleration Award and you may be eligible for the Collaborative Science Award. Please review all eligibility requirements to be sure you are eligible.

I am currently already funded by other early career awards. Am I still eligible to apply?

Grantees may obtain funds for their research from other funding sources, provided that there is no conflict with meeting the terms of the CZI award.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
[Collaborative Science Awards \(CS\)](#)**Can I be a Principal Investigator or co-PI on more than one application?**

No. Each investigator can only be an applicant/Principal Investigator or co-Principal Investigator on one application.

Could you please clarify what the clinician's role is?

The clinician partner should have active clinical engagement in an area relevant to the proposal. This may involve treating patients or other forms of clinical practice relevant to patients (for instance, pathology or radiology). Clinical administrators who are actively involved in supervising clinical care may also be eligible. The expectation is that all collaborators (including the clinical partner) will actively participate in Network activities. Clinical partners in these collaborative projects will play important roles as mentors to help the collective work of the Neurodegeneration Challenge Network stay closely aligned to the clinical contexts of these disorders and to the needs of patients. The application form requires a brief description of the contributions/role of each collaborative partner, including the clinical partner.

What is the role of the coordinating PI?

The coordinating PI will take responsibility for managing the group collaboration and be the administrative point of contact for CZI and any partners, including Silicon Valley Community Foundation (SVCF). The coordinating PI must be affiliated with the institution submitting the application and grant funds will be awarded to that institution which will take responsibility for distributing funds to the institutions of the other members of the collaboration. The coordinating PI should be the person submitting the application on behalf of the collaborative team.

If our team is invited for an interview, who needs to attend? Who will cover our travel costs? What if our whole team is not available?

If invited, all team members (PI and named co-PIs) must attend the interview. If you or a team member has a conflict with these dates, we ask that you notify us when you apply and in cases where necessary, we may be able to make alternative arrangements. We are aware that the dates overlap with Rosh Hashanah and will make accommodations. CZI will cover the travel costs of applicants who are invited for an interview as part of the application process.