

MIND PRIZE
“Maximizing Innovation in Neuroscience Discovery”
An initiative from The Pershing Square Foundation
2026 Application Guidelines

PRIZE OVERVIEW

The Pershing Square Foundation’s (PSF) brain initiative funds cutting-edge research that revolutionizes our ability to predict, prevent, and treat neurodegenerative diseases (NDDs). Advancing our fundamental understanding of the brain and cognition to ultimately combat neurodegeneration and related diseases is a goal of increasing urgency. Breakthroughs in basic scientific and translational research will yield critical tools for and knowledge of NDDs, including Alzheimer’s Disease and Dementia, which affect millions of people worldwide.

The MIND (Maximizing Innovation in Neuroscience Discovery) Prize supports and empowers early-to-mid-career investigators to rethink conventional paradigms around NDDs. Modeled after the Pershing Square Sohn Prize for Young Investigators in Cancer Research, the MIND Prize catalyzes interdisciplinary approaches and facilitate collaborations across academic departments and institutions. It fuels the groundbreaking research that will accelerate our understanding of NDDs at every level.

Projects may range from the invention of novel tools, techniques, and technologies for mapping and analyzing the brain to bold approaches that demonstrate extraordinary therapeutic potential. Research domains may include—but are not limited to—neurobiology, brain imaging and mapping, machine learning, drug delivery, and synthetic biology.

MIND Prize winners each receive \$250,000/year for three years, and they become part of a unique network of researchers associated with PSF. Generally, five to seven prizes will be awarded annually. Benefits include:

- Facilitated partnerships with like-minded researchers within and across institutions
- Networking programs such as collaborations and discussions with industry mentors, introductions to philanthropic and for-profit investors in the business community, special industry networking and entrepreneurship events, and more
- An annual retreat
- Opportunities to present at conferences and events (hosted by PSF and other organizations)

APPLICATION PROCESS

The application process will be conducted in two stages:

Stage 1: Letter of Intent (LOI), biosketch, and budget – Opens on **Monday, August 25th, 2025** to all who meet the eligibility criteria.

- For clarity, the MIND Prize does not have a full proposal stage. Projects will be evaluated solely through the LOI.

Stage 2: Presentation – Finalists will be invited to present their proposal to the Scientific Board at the 2026 MIND Prize Review Board Meeting in Manhattan, New York (a remote option will be available, if necessary, but in-person is preferred) on **Thursday, January 29th, 2026**.

TIMELINE AND KEY DATES

Please note that PSF may adjust the notification dates without notice to applicants:

August 25, 2025: Application opens to receive Letters of Intent (LOI)

September 29, 2025: Deadline to submit LOI

December 17, 2026: Selected applicants invited to present at Finalist Review Board Meeting

January 29, 2026: MIND Prize Finalist Review Board Meeting in NYC

Early February 2026: 2026 MIND Prize winners notified

May 1, 2026: Projects start

TBA, 2026: Prize Award Dinner in NYC

CRITERIA

Radically innovative and scientifically sound research: PSF seeks high-risk, high-reward proposals that focus on novel interdisciplinary approaches to neuroscience research and are grounded in sound reasoning from first principles. The MIND Prize was created to fund projects that have been deemed too risky or speculative for traditional funding sources but still hold the potential for radical impact. It should be a unique project for scientists, who are encouraged to stretch their imagination into areas that can substantially change the area of research. Investigators with or without core neuroscience backgrounds are encouraged to apply. We are committed to supporting scientists whose imagination and fresh insights could substantially change an area of research by applying their expertise to new directions. Scientific merit of proposals will be determined by peer review by the Scientific Advisory Board. For more insight, please review our panel of board members and archive of past winning proposals [on our website](#).

Quality of the applicant: Applicants must display creativity, adaptability, strong written communication skills, and the ability to collaborate with others. They embody an entrepreneurial spirit for driving impact and scale.

Application to neurodegeneration: Proposals that articulate a clear application to and impact on the field of neurodegenerative and neurocognitive disorders, with a lens of Alzheimer's Disease and Dementias, will be favored.

ELIGIBILITY

An MD, PhD, or MD-PhD degree (or equivalent) is required. Applicants must have completed **at least one (1) but no more than eight (8) years** of independent research experience as a tenure-track faculty member (or equivalent) by the start date of the Prize (May 2026).

Principal Investigators (PIs) must hold faculty appointments at academic research institutions in the United States of America. Multiple applicants from the same institution may apply as long as eligibility criteria are met. **Applicants may only apply to the MIND Prize a total of three (3) times.**

Applicants to The Pershing Square Foundation prize programs (the MIND Prize, Pershing Square Sohn Cancer Prize, and Ovarian Cancer Challenge Grant) can **only apply to one program at a time**. For example, if you apply to the 2026 MIND Prize, you cannot apply to the 2026 Pershing Square Sohn Cancer Prize that same year.

Current grantees may not apply to another PSF prize program until they are in their third and final year of the award, or their award term has concluded.

An applicant, who is not a U.S. citizen or permanent resident, by submitting an application for this funding, assures that his/her visa status will provide sufficient time to complete the project and grant term within the United States. Investigators need not be specifically trained in neuroscience; however, they should have access to an environment capable of conducting high-quality, high-impact research related to the understanding of the human brain and/or cognition, with a lens on Alzheimer's Disease and Dementias. The Pershing Square Foundation does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

LETTER OF INTENT (LOI)

LOIs are due **Monday, September 29th, 2026 by 5pm ET**. The LOI is a **one-page document** in Georgia, 11-point font, single-spaced, with one-half inch (.05) margins that answers the following questions: **What do you think is missing in this field and what is your proposal to fill that gap? Why you, and why is this project worth funding?** Figures are accepted but must remain legible within the one-page limit. References are not included in the limit. In answering the above questions, please be sure to include the following elements:

1. A description of the proposed research project—must include scientific background and rationale, aims, and research plan;

- We encourage you to be the most innovative and creative you can be!
 - Please start with a delineated hypothesis.
2. A description of why the project is innovative within the specific research focus area;
 3. A description of how the MIND Prize funding will help your research contribute to the field.

A **budget** and a **biosketch** (slightly different from NIH format, using our own template) will be required along with the LOI. Templates for both will be provided, and applicants must use these templates. Templates and the link to submission form can be found on our application portal: <https://prizeapplication.smapply.io/>.

The total budget per year must reach but should not exceed \$250,000 (this includes direct and indirect costs). The budget should be constructed as follows*:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Total Direct Costs	\$225,000	\$225,000	\$225,000	\$675,000
Indirect Costs (10% of total annual payment)	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$75,000
TOTAL (Direct & Indirect)	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$750,000

***NOTE:** You can absolutely have less than \$25K in indirect costs and more than \$225K in direct costs. You simply cannot exceed the numbers above, and totals must reach \$250K/year.

REVIEW MECHANISMS

- After submission of the LOI, applications will undergo review by the [Scientific Advisory Board](#).
- Applicants will be selected from a group of qualified individuals based on their credentials, the merits of their proposals, and the connection of their proposals to the goals of The Pershing Square Foundation's MIND Prize.
- Finalists will be invited to present their proposal at the 2026 Review Board Meeting, to be held on Thursday, January 29th, 2026, in New York City. A virtual option will be available, although in-person attendance is preferred, and travel expenses will be reimbursed.
- The final selection will be contingent upon ratification by PSF leadership.
- As a policy, PSF does not provide reviewer critiques or evaluations to applicants.

PRIZE ADMINISTRATION

Award Agreement

Upon acceptance of the MIND Prize, the PI and their employing institution will be required to sign an award agreement indicating acceptance of the PSF Terms and Conditions. Among other requirements, PSF must be notified in advance and approve of any significant changes in research objectives, key personnel, or budget and must be acknowledged in related publications. PSF does not ask for IP or a revenue share. As the agreement template reflects over a decade of collaboration with institutions on best practices and fair terms, we do not allow ANY edits to the award agreement unless there is information included that is factually incorrect. If you have questions about this before applying, please email us.

Publicity

By submitting an application for funding, the PI grants PSF permission to use their name, image, likeness and quotes at any time in connection with the publicity relating to this Award (whether during the Award period or after) provided that such use is factual, accurate and for non-commercial purposes only. PSF will coordinate with the appropriate individuals with the employing institution for use of institution name. (Further publicity terms related to the PI's institution will be outlined in the award agreement and will be agreed to upon agreement execution.)

Funding

PSF will allow no more than 10% of the award amount (\$25,000/year) to be allocated to indirect costs. Full term funding will be contingent upon review of annual progress reports and other oversight activities conducted by PSF. PSF will determine future funding at its sole discretion. Multi-year support is not automatic and is conditioned on meeting certain milestones and deliverables defined in the Award Agreement, including submission of complete and accurate progress reports indicating that the project is meeting measurable objectives.

Annual Retreat

Prize winners, academic and industry leaders, Scientific Advisory Board members, and select guests will be invited to attend an annual scientific retreat.

Reporting Requirements

All projects are required to provide an annual written progress report in accordance with applicable IRS requirements. The reports will be reviewed to ensure that the purposes of the grants are being fulfilled. A template and reminder will be sent in advance of the deadline. The procedures outlined above are in accordance with the procedure for making grants to 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations approved by the IRS for The Pershing Square Foundation.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Please find answers to [Frequently Asked Questions here](#).

Any additional questions concerning this RFP should be addressed to: info@MINDPrize.org

We also recommend [reading this article](#) from *PLoS Computational Biology* on best practices for grant applicants.

About The Pershing Square Foundation: <https://pershingsquarephilanthropies.org/>