THE MCKNIGHT ENDOWMENT FUND

FOR NEUROSCIENCE

**2025 McKnight Scholar Award Guidelines and Application**

**BACKROUND**

The McKnight Endowment Fund for Neuroscience (MEFN), an independent charitable organization established by The McKnight Foundation, was inspired by William L. McKnight’s personal interest in memory and its diseases. When Mr. McKnight (1887-1979) created the McKnight Foundation, he set aside part of his legacy to bring hope to those suffering from brain injury or disease and cognitive impairment. His descendants honor his commitment to neuroscience, and recognize that to continue the high level of excellence of the program the MEFN needs to incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion in its award programs. The program will advance equity and drive innovation through inclusive excellence, recognizing that progress in neuroscience will be enhanced by the inclusion of new and diverse perspectives and voices.

The McKnight Scholar Awards are given each year to 10 exceptional young scientists who are in the early stages of establishing an independent laboratory and research career. The intent of the program is to foster the commitment by these scientists to research careers that will have an important impact on the study of the brain. The program seeks to support scientists committed to mentoring neuroscientists from underrepresented groups at all levels of training. Applicants for the McKnight Scholar Award must demonstrate their ability to solve significant problems in neuroscience, which could include the translation of basic research to clinical practice. They should demonstrate a commitment to an equitable and inclusive lab environment.

**ELIGIBILITY**

Applicants for the McKnight Scholar Award must be independent investigators at not-for-profit research institutions in the United States and must hold a faculty position at the rank of Assistant Professor and must have served at that rank for less than five years at the application deadline (exceptions made be made for parental leave). For this year’s round, that means that the applicant must not have started serving in the rank of Assistant Professor any earlier than January 13, 2020.

Individuals holding other titles such as Instructor, Research Assistant Professor, Adjunct Assistant Professor, or Instructor are not eligible. If the host institution does not use professorial titles, a letter from a senior institutional official (e.g. Dean or Director of Research) must confirm that the applicant controls their own dedicated institutional resources, laboratory space, and/or facilities. We seek to enhance geographic, gender, and racial diversity in neuroscience, and we encourage women and members of communities of color to apply. Applicants may not apply in more than two rounds of competition, have already been granted tenure, or hold another award from the McKnight Endowment Fund.

A candidate may submit separate applications to both Scholar and Neurobiology of Brain Disorders during the same cycle. If the applicant receives a Scholar Award and becomes a finalist for NBD, their application to NBD would be rescinded as they cannot hold two awards simultaneously.

**BENEFITS**

In this competition, up to ten McKnight Scholars will be selected to receive three years of support, beginning July 1, 2025. The total award is $225,000 paid in equal installments of $75,000 in 2025, 2026, and 2027. Allowable budget items include salaries and fringe benefits, tuition, equipment, supplies, animal costs, costs for technical services, etc. Funds cannot be used for indirect costs.

Most McKnight award winners will tell you that a huge benefit of receiving a McKnight award is the chance to join a community of the nation’s best neuroscientists that they will continue to learn from, interact and collaborate with over their lifetime. Award winners attend the conference for the three years after receiving the award, and then return to the conference every three years. No other community in neuroscience has this kind of longitudinal impact and that demonstrates such a strong sense of community.

The McKnight Conference on Neuroscience has met in Aspen, Colorado since 1998, and invites over 100 current and previous McKnight awardees every year. The bulk of the conference involves third year current awardees sharing the results of their research and ample opportunities for informal scientific discussion to fuel new ideas and collaborations. An entire session is devoted to a neurological disorder (e.g. Alzheimer’s, Autism, Depression, among others) with specialists invited to speak and host a Q & A.

**APPLICATION PROCESS**

All application components are due by no later than **Monday January 13, 2025, at 5 PM Central**.

**Changes to application for 2025:**

1. McKnight no longer requests a detailed project budget as part of the application. But all funding restrictions still apply (see Benefits section above)
2. Letters of Reference needed have been reduced from four to three.
3. Page length of Description of proposed research project has been reduced from six to four pages.
4. Our inclusion statement more clearly asks how the application is addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion in sciences both inside and outside their lab if applicable.

**Where to Apply**

The application process is online. Please [click here](https://www.GrantRequest.com/SID_5768?SA=SNA&FID=35007) to access the online portal.

**Application Components**

The applicationmust include the following components (in the following order):

1. Completed face sheet.
2. Biographical sketch in NIH format.
3. Description of the proposed research project. The proposal should be introduced with an abstract of 200 words or less, followed by a detailed statement of plans for the three-year research program. The proposal should be introduced with an abstract of 200 words or less, followed by a detailed statement of plans for the three-year research program. The proposed research need not present a totally new line of research but should represent one of your lab’s most innovative and impactful directions. The proposal (abstract, narrative and figures, but not bibliography) must not exceed 4 numbered single-spaced pages in 12-point font with 1-inch margins.
4. A defining principle of the McKnight Endowment Fund for Neuroscience is to foster community and support mentorship. A one-page narrative describing how you are: 1) working to create an inclusive lab environment; and 2) addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion in science outside your lab. Keep the focus on personal experience and specific actions you have taken, and not just philosophy or planned activities.
5. List of other support including all resources (both start-up support and external funding) available in support of their research, following NIH guidelines.
6. Statement from responsible financial officer at sponsoring institution (1 page, form attached).
7. Supporting information from applicant’s chairperson at the sponsoring institution (2 pages, form attached).
8. Links to 5 recent publicly accessible publications (can include pre-prints e.g. on BioRxiv).
9. Three letters of reference from individuals familiar with the applicant’s work, sent separately and in confidence. Please forward the following instructions to your three referees:

*The McKnight Endowment Fund for Neuroscience Scholar Awards support young applicants embarking on an independent research career in the neurosciences. We would appreciate your candid comments on the applicant’s training and research accomplishments, and on the applicant’s potential as an independent investigator in the neurosciences. We also welcome comments on the applicant’s commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in neuroscience. There is no specific format for the letter. Please email a PDF of your reference letter by Monday, January 15, 2025 at 5 PM Central to* [*neuro@mcknight.org*](mailto:neuro@mcknight.org)*, indicating in the subject line who you are recommending. Your comments will be seen by the McKnight Scholar Awards Review Committee and will otherwise be held in confidence.*

**Review of applications**

The McKnight Scholar Awards Selection Committee will evaluate applications and invite approximately 20 finalists to interview with the committee. Applicants invited to interview will be notified in early April 2025. The interviews are scheduled for early May and will be conducted remotely. The committee will then recommend candidates to the Board of Directors of the Endowment Fund for final decision. Awards will be announced in late June 2025.

**Questions? Email**

Joel Krogstad

Program Manager

McKnight Endowment Fund for Neuroscience

Minneapolis, Minnesota

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**1. Face Sheet**

THE MCKNIGHT ENDOWMENT FUND FOR NEUROSCIENCE

APPLICATION FOR THE MCKNIGHT SCHOLAR AWARDS

*Please print or type and fill in all fields; can go beyond form pages*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name** |  |

(last) (highest degree[s]) (first) (middle initial)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Title of Project** |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Academic Institution/Department** |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Academic Position/Start Date** |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **U.S. Mail Address** |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Contact Information** |  |

(email address) (mobile telephone number)

THIS INFORMATION IS OPTIONAL

Background (check all that apply)

* African-American (Black)
* Native American/Indigenous
* Alaskan Native
* Pacific Islander
* Asian
* White
* Latino/a/x
* Prefer to Self-Describe \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Gender

* Male
* Female
* Non-binary
* Transgender
* Prefer to Self-Describe\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**INDIVIDUALS PROVIDING LETTERS OF REFERENCE (3 TOTAL NEEDED)**

Name Title Email Address

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. |  | |
| 2. |  | |
| 3. |  | |
| **Signature of Applicant:** | |  | |
| **Date:** | |  | |

**6. Statement of Responsible Officer of Sponsoring Institution**

*Please print or type information clearly*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Applicant’s Name:** |  |

(last) (first) (middle initial)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sponsoring Institution:** | |  | | |
| **Name of Responsible Financial Officer:** | |  |
| **Email:** | |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Title:** | |  | |
| **Department:** | |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **U.S. Mail Address:** |  |
| **Signature:** |  |

(date)

By signing this statement, the responsible financial officer indicates approval of applicant’s proposed use of McKnight Scholar Award support and agreement by the sponsoring institution to administer the award.

**7. Supporting information from chairperson at sponsoring institution**

*Please print or type clearly*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Applicant’s Name:** |  |

(last) (first) (middle initial)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Sponsoring Institution:** |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Department:** |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name of Chairperson:** |  | Title |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Signature**: |  |

(date)

**PLEASE USE AS MUCH SPACE AS YOU NEED**

1. Does the applicant’s proposed experimentation involve human and/or animal subjects?

2. If the answer to question 1 is “yes,” has the proposed experimentation been submitted to and passed the review of the appropriate institutional committee(s)?

3. What is the title and nature of the applicant’s appointment at your institution?

4. When did the applicant’s appointment begin?

6. What is the source of the applicant’s salary? (If there is more than one source, be specific.)

7. What are the applicant’s teaching responsibilities?

8. What sort of startup money and other institutional support has been provided to the applicant?

9. What sort of space and facilities have you provided to the applicant?

1. Is there anything we should know about your institution’s commitment to this applicant, or the applicant’s research environment?