

2024 Pilot Award – Request for Applications

The goal of the Pilot Award is to provide early support for exploratory ideas considered higher risk but with the potential for transformative results, particularly those with novel hypotheses for autism. This funding mechanism is particularly suitable for investigators new to the autism field, though we encourage applicants to consult with experts in autism research to ensure their projects are relevant to the human condition. We encourage applications that propose research to link genetic or other ASD risk factors to molecular, cellular, circuit or behavioral mechanisms and set the stage for development of novel interventions, including work in human subjects.

The total budget of a Pilot Award is \$300,000 or less, including 20 percent indirect costs, over a period of up to two (2) years.

Projects proposing research in human subjects may request a budget up to \$500,000, including 20 percent indirect costs, over a period of up to two (2) years.

Policies and
Procedures

Application Deadline:
June 13, 2024

Maximum Budget

Over Two Years
\$300,000

Important Dates

Application Available:
April 2024

Application Deadline:
June 13, 2024

Award Notification:
November 2024

Award Start Date:

Awards may begin as early as Feb 1, 2025, but we encourage PIs to select a project start date that best accommodates the needs of their project. Funds are expected to be expended as requested during each annual budget period. Projects must begin on the first of the month.

[RFA](#) [How To Apply](#) [FAQ](#) [Past Awards](#)

SFARI Mission

The mission of the Simons Foundation Autism Research Initiative (SFARI) is to improve the understanding, diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorders (ASD) by funding innovative research of the highest quality and relevance.

To this end, we solicit applications for Pilot Awards from individuals who will conduct bold, imaginative, rigorous and relevant research.

Objective of the Pilot Award

The goal of the Pilot Award is to provide early support for exploratory ideas, particularly those with novel hypotheses. Appropriate projects for this mechanism include those considered higher risk but with the potential for transformative results, including work in human subjects. Projects that represent continuations of ongoing work (whether funded by SFARI or other funders) are not appropriate for this mechanism.

This funding mechanism is particularly suitable for investigators who are new to the autism field, though we encourage those new to the field to consult with experts in autism research to ensure their projects are relevant to the human condition.

In particular, we encourage applications that propose research to link genetic or other ASD risk factors to molecular, cellular, circuit or behavioral mechanisms and set the stage for development of novel interventions. Please read more about [SFARI's scientific perspectives](#). We also strongly advise applicants to familiarize themselves with the

currently funded projects and resources that SFARI supports and to think about how their proposals might complement existing efforts.

As with other Pilot projects, proposals in human subjects should be relevant, novel, exploratory, high-risk and with the potential for transformative results. They may test new mechanisms, employ new technology or analytics, or take innovative approaches to phenotyping or stratification that stand to move the field forward in transformative ways. Given the heterogeneity and multifactorial causes of ASD, SFARI places a premium on the use of well-characterized and sufficiently powered cohorts. To facilitate recruitment of cohorts with well-characterized ASD and associated neurodevelopmental disabilities, SFARI has developed the Research Match program, which helps investigators recruit participants from Simons collections, including SPARK and Simons Searchlight. RFA applicants are strongly encouraged, but not required, to use Research Match as part of their participation recruitment strategy. Recognizing that sufficiently-powered work in humans can be costly, projects employing human subjects will have the option for a separate (higher) budget track, as detailed below.

Level and Duration of Funding

The total budget of a Pilot Award is \$300,000 or less, including 20 percent indirect costs, over a period of up to two (2) years. Projects proposing research in human subjects may request a higher budget (up to \$500,000 over 2 years), but must include a compelling justification, particularly for the required level of effort of all key personnel. Allowable indirect costs to the primary institution for subcontracts are not included in the total budget threshold (see our grant policies). We encourage investigators to take advantage of the flexibility in budget and duration, tailoring the scope of the award as appropriate for their specific aims. Proposed budgets will be assessed on the appropriateness for the scope of work and merit of commitment. Larger budgets invite heightened scrutiny. We strongly encourage investigators considering budgets that exceed our guidelines to consult SFARI before submission (please contact sfarigrants@simonsfoundation.org).

Funds are expected to be expended as requested during each annual budget period.

Please note that in the event of budgetary or other considerations the Simons Foundation reserves the right to refer an application to the Simons Foundation International, Ltd. (SFI) for consideration and funding, in which case SFI's grant policies would apply.

Eligibility

All applicants and key collaborators must hold a Ph.D., M.D. or equivalent degree and have a faculty position or the equivalent at a college, university, medical school or other research facility.

Applications may be submitted by domestic and foreign nonprofit organizations; public and private institutions, such as colleges, universities, hospitals, laboratories, and units of state and local government; and eligible agencies of the federal government. There are no citizenship or country requirements.

Multiple Applications, Resubmissions and Renewals

Unsuccessful applications submitted to previous SFARI RFAs may be resubmitted to this RFA, if relevant. For all resubmissions, we ask principal investigators (PIs) to submit a statement of changes describing substantive changes to the application since the previous submission. If the previous application was externally reviewed, this document should include point-by-point responses to the reviewers' critiques. If the revised application does not include substantive changes, it is unlikely that the outcome will change. This is especially true for applications that were not externally reviewed, as this decision is often based on the relevance of the project to SFARI's mission. **We also will not accept applications that have previously been considered three or more times (regardless of which RFA they were previously submitted to).**

Investigators may submit multiple applications on different topics. **However, it is highly unlikely that two awards will be made to the same PI within one RFA cycle.**

Given the focus of this RFA on bold, imaginative new ideas, it is unlikely that a renewal of a currently funded project (either from SFARI or elsewhere) will be a good fit for this RFA. We encourage investigators to seek continuation support from outside funding sources, or, if eligible, to consider applying to the [Pilot Progression RFA](#), which will open for applications in April 2024. Decisions on new proposals from current SFARI Investigators will include the evaluation of progress on previous or ongoing SFARI grants.

Instructions for Submission

Applications must be submitted via the [Simons Award Manager \(SAM\)](#). Please click on the Funding Opportunities icon and navigate to the Autism Research – Pilot Award – 2024 call. Click the Create Application button to begin. Applications should be started and submitted under the applicant's own account in SAM.

Application templates will be available in SAM on April 11, 2024. Applications will include a Specific Aims page and a 3-page Proposal Narrative. Up to 10 figures can be included separately and do not count towards the page limit.

Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Many of the greatest ideas and discoveries come from a diverse mix of minds, backgrounds and experiences. The Simons Foundation is committed to grantmaking that inspires and supports greater diversity and inclusiveness by cultivating a funding environment that ensures representation of all identities and differences and equitable access to information and resources for all applicants and grantees.

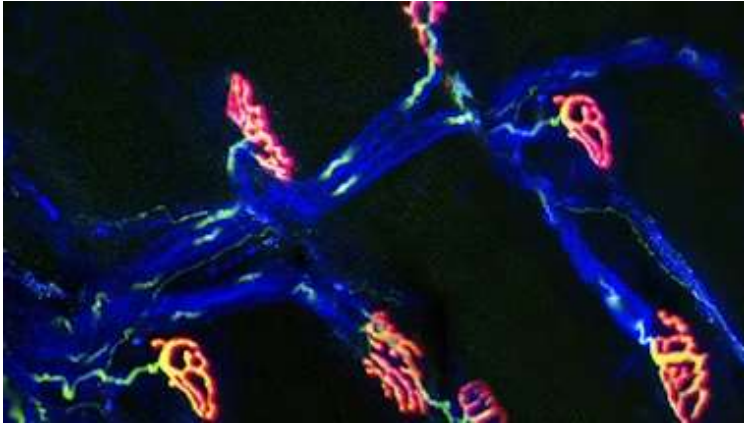
The Simons Foundation provides equal opportunities to all applicants for funding without regard to race, religion, color, age, sex, pregnancy, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic disposition, neurodiversity, disability, veteran status or any other protected category under federal, state and local law. We also fund programs directed at supporting scientists from disadvantaged backgrounds or underrepresented groups, often working closely with professional societies and other funding agencies.

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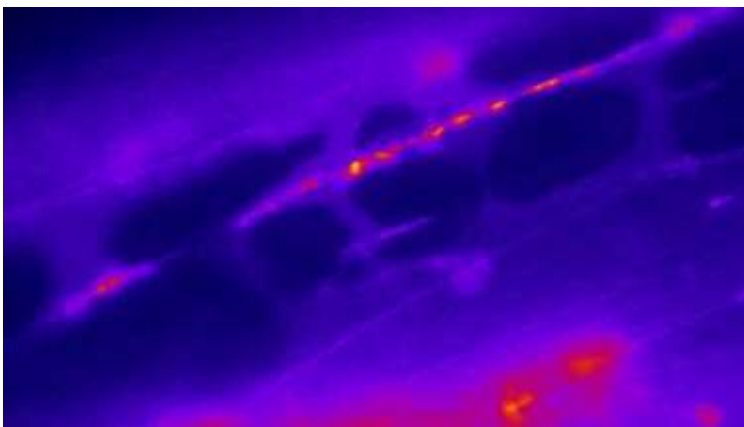
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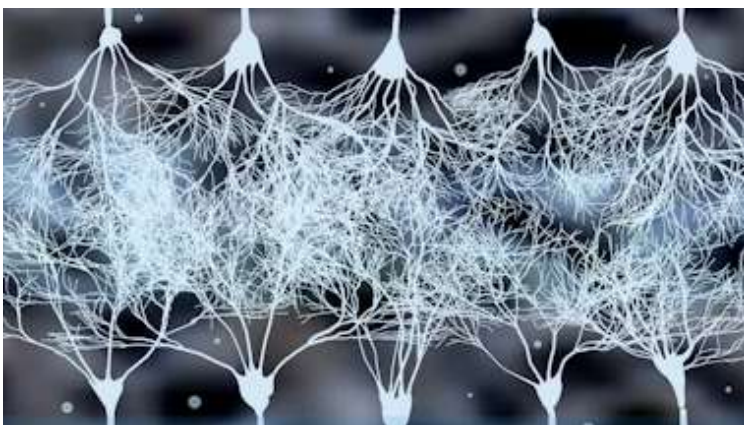
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