

Mathematics & Physical Sciences

Simons Collaborations in Mathematics and the Physical Sciences

Policies and
Procedures
Open

Application Deadline
October 29, 2026

Important Dates

LOI Deadline:
12 p.m. (noon) Eastern Time,

October 29, 2026

LOI Notification By:
January 1, 2027

Full Proposal Deadline:
12 p.m. (noon) Eastern Time,

February 24, 2027

Award Notification:
July 1, 2027

Award Start Date:
January 1, 2028

The Simons Foundation's Mathematics and Physical Sciences (MPS) division invites applications for the Simons Collaborations in MPS program.

Deadline for Letter of Intent (LOI) submission: October 29, 2026, at 12 p.m. (noon) Eastern time.

Basis for Awards

The aim of the Simons Collaborations in MPS program is to stimulate progress on fundamental scientific questions of major importance in mathematics, theoretical physics and theoretical computer science.

A Simons Collaboration in MPS should address a mathematical or theoretical topic of fundamental scientific importance, where a significant, new development creates a novel area for exploration or provides a new direction for progress in an established field. The questions addressed by the collaboration may be concrete or conceptual, but there should be little doubt that answering them would constitute a major scientific milestone. The project should have clearly defined initial activities and goals by which progress and success can be measured. The support from the foundation should be seen as critical for the objectives of the project.

The project should involve outstanding researchers in a range of career stages. Excellence of the scientific leadership is one of the main criteria in the selection process. The project should be organized and managed in a manner engendering a high level of collaboration.

Collaboration Director and Principal Investigators (PIs)

Each collaboration is led by a collaboration director who is expected to determine the scientific agenda, coordinate the scientific activities of the other members, determine (in collaboration with the other members) the scientific themes, coordinate a collaboration website and organize collaboration meetings and activities as appropriate, including a two-day annual meeting at the foundation. The director will be the foundation's main point of contact for the activities of the collaboration and will be responsible for monitoring the overall progress of the research effort and deciding on research directions and personnel as the collaboration evolves.

PIs are expected to perform research that advances the goals of the collaboration and to collaborate as appropriate with other members of the collaboration. PIs are also expected to assist the director and other PIs in fulfilling the additional collaboration obligations outlined above. Attendance at the annual meeting held at the foundation is expected for each collaboration member.

Proposals should specify a core group of PIs. Additional PIs may be added only after the LOI is approved. Interinstitutional and international collaborations are allowed.

Eligibility

Personnel:

The collaboration director must hold a tenured faculty, or equivalent, position at an educational institution with a Ph.D. program in the director's department at the time of application and for the duration of the award. PIs and co-Investigators (co-Is) must hold a tenured or tenure-track faculty, or equivalent, position at an educational institution at the time of application and for the duration of the award. There are no restrictions on the department and/or discipline of the director or PIs/co-Is. Directors, PIs, co-Is and other collaboration participants may be from non-U.S. institutions. A co-I must be employed by or be affiliated with a PI institution or another organization participating in the project under a consortium agreement. Please see the foundation's [grant policies](#) for further information regarding requirements and responsibilities of PIs and co-Is.

A PI in a collaboration project may participate as a main PI on their own application/award in a collaboration or in the Additional PI role on another PI's application/award. An individual in a Principal Investigator (Collaboration) or Additional PI role is considered a Collaboration PI. PIs not requesting any funding must be associated with a participating institution and added to the applicable record in an Additional PI role. Individuals participating scientifically in a project, but not requesting funding, can also be added in a Collaborator role on a collaboration application as appropriate.

Simons Foundation employees who receive a W-2 (Wage and Tax Statement) from the Simons Foundation, including employees of the Flatiron Institute, may not apply as a principal investigator (PI) to any Simons Foundation or Simons Foundation International requests for applications (RFAs) released by the Simons Foundation. PIs and any project personnel listed on the application who will receive funding for salary, travel, support for students, postdocs or research staff, lab equipment, computing time or other individual

expenses may not be employees of the Simons Foundation, which includes the Flatiron Institute.

Limit on number of collaborations per PI/director:

- An individual in a PI, Additional PI or co-I role may be part of not more than two letters of intent (LOI) and only one full proposal, as long as all eligibility requirements are met.
- An active PI, Additional PI co-I or director on a currently funded collaboration project cannot be part of an LOI or proposal and can only participate on one funded collaboration at a time in any of those roles, including during the no-cost extension period.

Institutions:

Applications may be submitted by established U.S. and foreign public and private educational institutions and stand-alone research centers.

Funding to U.S. national labs or salary support of scientists employed at these labs is not allowed. Scientists employed at national labs may be nonfunded collaboration members, and collaboration funding may be used to support travel or local expenses related to the participation of the lab-based scientist in collaboration activities or to support travel and local expenses of students or postdoctoral fellows appointed at universities who work with collaboration members at national labs. For-profit institutions are also not eligible to receive grant funds.

There is no LOI limit per institution.

SF and SFI do not provide funding to institutions in China (including institutions in Hong Kong) or to fiscal sponsors or agents of institutions in China or Hong Kong. This includes funding to support subcontracts at institutions in China or Hong Kong or consultants residing or working for institutions in China or Hong Kong.

Funding

- **Award Amount:** A Simons Collaboration in MPS is budgeted at up to \$2 million per year for an initial period of four years, inclusive of 20 percent indirect costs (see

grant policies). The foundation would allow the annual budget to vary from \$2 million as long as the total four-year budget is no more than \$8 million.

- **Award Duration:** Four years, January 1, 2028 – December 31, 2031
- **Number of Awards:** The foundation expects to award up to three new collaborations in 2027, which will begin January 1, 2028.
- **Future Funding:** The scientific impact of the collaboration will be evaluated at either the year three or four annual meeting, and future funding for three additional years will be considered. Additional funding beyond year seven will not be considered.

Allowable Expenses

The funding provided under a Simons Collaboration in MPS grant may be used to support research expenses in the following categories:

- Up to one month of summer salary support and related benefits for the collaboration director and each PI/co-Investigator per grant year. Typically, summer salary is solely for 9-month/academic-year faculty to charge research efforts to grants during summer months. For PIs/co-Is with annual appointments (12-month), the program will allow PIs to request up to 1/12 of their annual year salary as a contribution to research time, only if an exception exists where their institution permits extra compensation for specific, separate activities outside of regular duties and provided that the summer salary request is not in violation of their institution's policies of more than 100 percent effort per year. Summer salary funds are not substitutional (cannot be used to relieve a university of salary costs) and cannot be used to reduce teaching loads below the departmental norm. They can only be used to supplement the salary similarly to a summer salary in the U.S. system.
- Teaching Reduction Exception for the Director only: reduction to a level not lower than one course per semester— Teaching reduction for other collaboration members is not an allowable expense.
- Conferences and meetings, including meals, travel, lodging, vehicle rentals for participants and facility fees.
- Salary support and related benefits, including tuition support, for staff/research scientists and postdoctoral, graduate and/or undergraduate research assistants. Please note that it is not the responsibility of the foundation to manage support for postdocs or grad students outside of the initial 4-year grant period.

- Support for visitors and collaborators, including salary and standard fringe benefits, travel, meals and lodging expenses. Related per diem expenses are allowable.
- Equipment, supplies and other research-related expenses, including computers, professional literature, publication expenses and professional membership dues.
- Collaboration-related travel for collaboration members per the travel policies of each participating institution. Parking, hotel, taxi, registration and other related travel and conference costs are allowable.
- Support for a collaboration administrator.
- Other expenses related to the support and administration of the collaboration (e.g., web design).

Expenditures in other expense categories may be possible but must be approved in advance by the foundation. The costs for the annual meeting held at the foundation will be paid directly by the foundation and will not factor into grant funds.

Note: The program is no longer utilizing the director's discretionary fund. All available funds should be requested in either the director or PI budgets.

Please see the Simons Foundation's [grant policies](#) for further guidelines.

Application Process

Letter of Intent:

A letter of intent (LOI) must be completed electronically and submitted by the proposed director via the Simons Award Manager (SAM) by **October 29, 2026, at 12 p.m. (noon) Eastern time**. Please refer to the [How to Apply](#) tab for further instructions. LOIs will be reviewed by Simons Foundation scientific staff.

Notification of the status of the LOI will be sent by January 1, 2026.

Please note that the volume of interest in this program is such that the foundation is not able to provide guidance on potential proposals. We use the LOI stage to assess suitability and novelty. The foundation recommends submitting an LOI if a proposed director believes their proposed collaboration project meets the criteria outlined in the RFA.

Full Proposal:

A review of the LOI may lead to a request for a full proposal, which will be due by **February 25, 2026, at 12 p.m. (noon) Eastern time**. Full proposals will be reviewed by Simons Foundation scientific staff and an expert external review committee. Project teams may be invited to come to the foundation to present their research plan.

Full proposal notifications will be sent by July 1, 2027. Awards will begin January 1, 2028.

Award Policies

Please note that in the event of budgetary or other considerations, The Simons Foundation, Inc. ("the Foundation" or "SF") reserves the right to refer an application to The Simons Foundation International, Ltd. ("SFI") for consideration and funding. SFI and SF have entered into an agreement pursuant to which SF provides program operations and grant administration services, including payment processing, to SFI. SFI grant recipients are subject to SF [policies and procedures](#).

Additional award terms may be included in the official award notification. Grantees are subject to the conditions outlined in their official award notification.

Our Commitment to Expanding Pathways to Science and Opportunities for All

Many of the greatest ideas and discoveries come from a diverse mix of minds, backgrounds and experiences. The Simons Foundation is committed to advancing basic science and mathematics to benefit humankind and expand our collective understanding of our world. As part of our mission, we support partners, programs and initiatives that seek to broaden the scientific community and open pathways to science and mathematics careers.

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.

Resources

- [How to Apply Instructions](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [SAM Frequently Asked Questions and Instructional Videos](#)



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