



International

Human Frontier
Science Program

Organization

Support for international interdisciplinary research collaborations

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Director of Awards



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Org

International Collaboration in Life Science Research

Supported by 17 members

Australia
Canada
European Commission
France
Germany
India
Israel
Italy
Japan

Republic of Korea
New Zealand
Norway
Singapore
South Africa
Switzerland
United Kingdom
United States of America





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International Collaboration in Life Science Research

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History

The heads of state of the G7 nations approved the proposal by former Prime Minister Nakasone of Japan for establishing the organization at their 1987 summit in Venice.

The international scientific community discussed the scope of the Program and in 1989 the Secretariat started working in Strasbourg (France) to prepare the first awards for 1990.

The original supporting Members were the countries of the **G7**, together with the **EU**. **Switzerland** joined in 1991. **Australia, the Republic of South Korea, India, New Zealand, Singapore, Israel, and Norway** have joined since 2004. **South Africa** joined in 2023.

More than 8000 scientists working in over 70 countries have been supported until now.





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HFSP's Mission

HFSP promotes and funds basic research

- innovative, cutting-edge research extending the frontiers of the life sciences
- focused on the elucidation of the sophisticated and complex mechanisms of living organisms (no applied projects)

HFSP attaches the highest importance to

- scientific merit
- internationality (especially intercontinentality)
- interdisciplinarity

HFSP's Mission

HFSP promotes and funds basic research by

- Research Grants – Program
- Research Grants – Early Career
- Long-Term Fellowships
- Cross-Disciplinary Fellowships
- HFSP Frontier Workshops

HFSP supports diversity and inclusiveness by

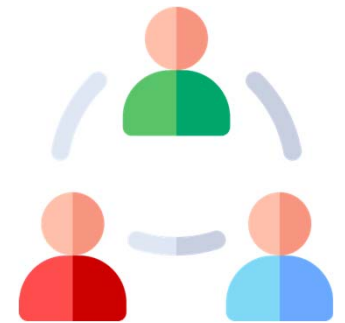
- Accelerator Grants
- Scientists4Scientists Initiative
- Awardees Meetings
- Grant-writing Master Classes

1280 research grants to 4605 scientists	3533 postdoctoral Fellowships	240 Research Grants – Early Career	3344 Long-Term Fellowships
189 Cross- Disciplinary Fellowships	55 countries with research grant awardees	74 nationalities of fellows	637 Early Career team members

Overview HFSP Support 2024

Research Grants (~2200 applicants in ~800 proposals > ~ 100 awardees in ~30 projects)

- International researcher teams (all “Research Grants”)
- Starting investigators (Research Grants - Early Career“)
- One team – one project– 3 years support
- USD 300/400/500.000 annually per team of 2/3/4 members



Postdoctoral Fellowships (~ 600 applicants for ~ 60 awards/year)

- PhD in biology („Long-Term“)
- PhD in physics, chemistry, etc. („Cross-Disciplinary“)
- Research abroad in a new country – 3 years support
- Salary support (plus child allowance, some support for travel etc)



Research that is supported

HFSP research projects that are:

- innovative, cutting-edge research extending the frontiers of the life sciences
- focused on the elucidation of the sophisticated and complex mechanisms of living organisms (no applied projects)
- Deal with any level of biological systems, for instance on
 - genes and individual molecules,
 - biophysical properties and structures of living material,
 - intracellular networks, intercellular associations in tissues and organs,
 - networks underlying the complex functions of entire organisms (including cognitive functions)
 - populations and ecosystems

https://www.hfsp.org/bookletRG2025#GrantsBooklet_2025_webversion.pdf/

Research that **is not** supported

HFSP does not support research projects that are:

- Applied and translational:
 - clinical and pharmaceutical research (human participants, diagnostics, therapy development)
 - applied technology or applied engineering, without a biological question
 - studies concerned with improving agricultural/forestry/fishery production and yield
 - Projects with focus on solving environmental/conservation problems
- Data collecting, descriptive, observational studies (e.g. –omics) not asking functional questions
- Research in for-profit environments (but collaboration are possible)

Many projects still lead to patents and applications – this is good, but should not be the primary aim



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HFSP Research Grants

All Research Grants

- team grants for 2-4 scientists
- any basic topic at the frontiers of the life sciences
- a research question that is new for all team members

Research Grants – Program

- scientists at any career stage in their independent career

Research Grants – Early Career

- all team members must be
 - within 5 years of their first independent position
 - within 10 years after PhD

NEW Accelerator Grants

allow awarded Research Grant teams to add a member from one of 7 eligible countries: India, S-Africa, S-Korea, Singapore, Japan, New Zealand and **Norway**

HFSP Research Grants

Two Step Review Process

Please note, this initiation deadline is not indicated on the application site!

Letter of Intent

1. Initiation deadline **17 March 2026**
2. Submission deadline **26 March 2026**
Evaluation of scope (~ 10% not in scope)
3. Review by the Review Committee
4. Discussion of ~250 most promising LOIs by Selection Committee
5. 80 - 100 invitations to submit proposal (beginning of July)
6. Notification to all teams mid-July

Invited Full Proposals

1. Submission deadline **mid-September 2026**
2. Reviewed by up to 6 external experts
3. Reviewed and ranked by 3 Review Committee members
4. Discussed at the Review Committee meeting end of January
5. Approval by Board of Trustees (late March)
6. Notification **end of March 2027**

**Guidelines for applicants and
Review Committee members can be found on www.hfsp.org**



HFSP Research Grants

Success rate and funding

Funding

- **Three-year grants**
- Principal applicant must be in an HFSP member country, others can be anywhere
 - **300 000 US\$ (team of 2) to 500 000 US\$ (team of 4, maximum) per year**
 - Not available for salary of the applicants
 - There is a reduction if more than one member works in the same country

Success rate

- **~ 2000 scientists submit ~800 Lols**
- 250-300 scientists invited to submit ~ 80-100 invited full proposals
- **~ 100 scientists funded in ~ 30 grant awards**
- ~40% of invited proposals are supported
- **~ 4 % of initial LOIs are supported**



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HFSP Research Grants in Norway

Since 1990:

- **308 applicants from Norway (including the 2025 cycle)**
- **12 Research Grant awardees in Norway (including 2025)**
- **Thus, a 4% success rate (equal to the general success rate)**

Recent awardees:

- **2022: Basil El Jundi**, Trondheim, with team members in Ecuador, Germany and USA,
Project: Unravelling the mechanisms of brain and behavioral elaboration in ecologically diverse butterflies
- **2023: Pawel Burkhardt**, Bergen, with the second team member in Germany
Project: Decoding the gelatinous origins of brain evolution
- **2024: Meley Rannestad**, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, with second team member in Ethiopia
Project: A novel approach to tropical dendroclimatology using hyperspectral imaging and deep learning
- **2025: Alexander Tøsdal Tveite**, Arctic University, Tromsø, with team members in Sweden and USA
Project: Growth rate control in methanotrophs: engineering a biological sink for atmospheric methane



https://www.hfsp.org/bookletRG2025#GrantsBooklet_2025_webversion.pdf/





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HFSP Research Grants

Successful HFSP projects

Stimulate novel, daring ideas and innovative approaches in basic life sciences

- blue sky research
- take high risk – promise high gain, aim at paradigm shift
- preliminary results are not required and not wanted
- Investigator driven, no priority areas

Include scientists from outside the life sciences in the team

- to bring new understanding and methodology
- international/intercontinental teams with close team integration

Develop new lines of research through new interdisciplinary collaborations

- working together on bold, novel, potentially transformative ideas
- Solve problems that a single lab could not tackle

HFSP Research Grants

Developing an application – Good Ideas

- Build an international, intercontinental team – **start NOW**
- Each team member should bring a **unique approach** to the research question, and **each investigator should be essential to the team**
- Think of a question at the absolute **frontier of your field** and **new for yourself**
Don't shy away from **risk**, but explain **how** the idea **may** work
Don't suggest anything you are already working on – no preliminary data!
- Convince that **close, ongoing interaction** between team members will happen
- Clearly **articulate the iterations** between theoretical and experimental work
- If models are included, give clear information on approaches

HFSP Research Grants

Developing an application – Bad Ideas

Avoid:

- “The next logical step” in your or another team member’s ongoing research
- Applications that can be funded by your national research funding agencies
- Collaborations within a single country
- More than one member from the same institution
- Adding someone famous for the name, not the contribution (“~~Add-on~~”)
- Starting with “we will improve the therapy of...” or “we will cure the ...” – the **research question has to be basic**, potential for applications is no hinder but should not be in focus

HFSP Research Grants

Writing the Letter of Intent

The Letter of Intent is a very short format

- The letter of Intent is the critical step in the HFSP selection process
- Win the reader in your first sentence (don't say "malaria is killing millions every year") – reviewers read many applications
- Simple language and style can be very convincing – reviewers are generalists
- Ask someone from outside the field to read it – are abbreviations needed or can they be replaced? Are concepts clear? Are you making your point?
- Do not write "this is interdisciplinary, international and innovative" - that should be clear from the text – reviewers have read this too often
- Do not waste space to say how fantastic the team this is. Focus on the novelty/frontierness of the science itself

HFSP Research Grants

Writing the HFSP Full Proposal

The Full Proposal has space for detailed information

- It will reveal whether the project or collaboration is genuine or simply the mainstream of one participating laboratory
- **No preliminary data!** If the project has already been started, it does not need HFSP funding... but proof of concept may be ok for risky methods.
- Do not list all possible methods that could be used, say what you plan to do, and if it is risky, which is the plan B
- Specify models and computational methods – the committee has this competence
- Read the literature, don't miss important papers – experts know the literature
- Think about which reviewers to list. HFSP may invite some reviewers suggested by the applicants but not if they are conflicted because they are your collaborators!



HFSP Accelerator Grants

A new instrument for more equity, inclusion and diversity in **frontier** life sciences **research**

Application

- All teams awarded March 2026 can apply with a new member* and a new sub-project
- Application guidelines are published in April
- The accelerator member collaborates on the application
- Application site opens July 2026
- Application deadline: September 2026
- Announcement of awards: March 2027

* Eligible countries in which the new member can work:
India, S-Africa, S-Korea, Singapore, Japan, New Zealand and **Norway**

Award

- If awarded, the new member joins for years 2 and 3 of the original grant period
- The awarded team received 100 000 USD in addition to the original grant in years 2 and 3
- The team decides about the fair distribution of funds
- All team members may use remaining funds to complete the project in year 4

Scientific excellence — Inclusion – Diversity – Equity – Frontier life sciences research



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HFSP Research Grants

Next Call for Applications

Award year 2026:

Announcement mid-December 2025

Application site opens January 2026

Deadlines:

Initiation of Letter of Intent: **17 March 2026**

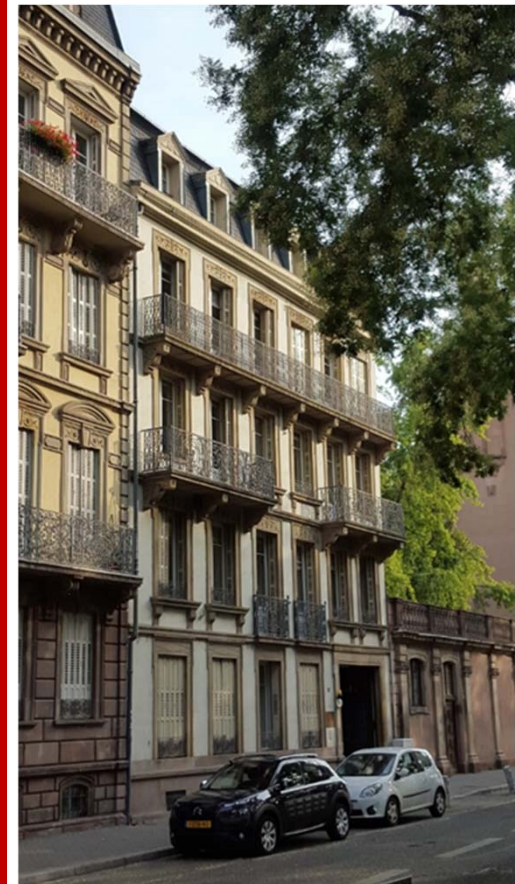
Submission of Letter of Intent: **26 March 2026**

Submission of invited Full Proposals: September 2026

Award announcement: end-March 2027

Check exact dates and more information here:

<https://www.hfsp.org/funding/hfsp-funding/research-grants>



HFSP Postdoctoral Fellowships

For PhD candidates that...

- ...are driven by adventurous new ideas (**high-risk, high-gain** wanted)
- ...intent to expand their work beyond the scope of the PhD project
- ...are willing to leave their scientific comfort zone and propose a significant change of fields/topics
- ...are motivated to move to a **new research environment & country**
- ...want to experiment with **new methods and approaches**
- ...aim to disrupt existing paradigms and established ways of thinking



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HFSP Postdoctoral Fellowships

- **Long-Term Fellowships:**

- for applicants with a PhD in a biological field
- to embark on a new project in a different field in the life sciences

- **Cross-Disciplinary Fellowships:**

- for applicants with a PhD from outside the life sciences (e.g. in physics, chemistry, mathematics, engineering or computer sciences)
- no prior training or research experience in the life sciences
- want to move to biological research



International
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HFSP Fellowships in Norway

Since 1990:

- 19 applicants from Norway
- 5 Norwegian Fellowship awardees
- 4 Fellowship awardees have chosen Norway as host country

Recent Norwegian fellowship awardees

- 2021: Inga A Frøland Steindal
going to James Cook University, Queensland, Australia
Saving the reef: identifying molecular and environmental factors underlying spawning in *A. millepora*
- 2025: Ida Jentoft
going to MPI for Multidisciplinary Sciences Göttingen, Germany
Mechanisms of translation reprogramming during embryonic diapause

HFSP Postdoctoral Fellowships

2-stage application process

Letters of Intent

1. Initiation deadline **6 May 2026**
2. Submission deadline **12 May 2026** (600-800)
3. ~ 10% not in scope or ineligible are removed
4. Initial review by Review Committee members
5. Ranking by scores
6. Top ~ 20% of Lol will receive an invitation to submit a full application
7. All others will be notified

Invited Full Proposals

1. Submission deadline **September 2026**
2. Reviewed by 2-3 external experts
3. Reviewed by the initial Lol Review Committee members
4. Scoring w/o cut off
5. Meeting of the full Review Committee in January to discuss all full applications and establish the final ranking
6. Notification **late March 2027**

Review process and list of committee members available on
<https://www.hfsp.org/funding>

HFSP Postdoctoral Fellowships

Application criteria

Applicants must....

- ...propose to work in a **new country** and with a **new supervisor**
 - Citizen of HFSP Member country? -> Choose to go anywhere in the world
 - Not from a Member country? -> Choose a lab in any Member country
- ...apply within 3 years of PhD
- ...have at least one first-author paper (or preprint, at LOI stage)
- **no preliminary results needed on the new project**

HFSP Postdoctoral Fellowships

Developing an application: good ideas

Important in a successful application

In your **Curriculum Vitae**, give evidence of your ability to

- think independently and beyond conventional approaches
- adopt new approaches and methodology

Propose a **Research Project** that

- is clearly **your idea** (conceptual input from supervisor is OK)
- is creative, **frontier** and basic research, challenges existing paradigms, addresses barriers to progress in the field
- will introduce you to **new fields, theory and methodology** (a clear departure from your previous research)



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HFSP Postdoctoral Fellowships

Developing an application: **bad ideas**

Do not propose a project

- that is only an incremental step forward
- that is the logic next step after your PhD (you need to be willing to significantly change your field of research)
- that is a mainstream project in your host's lab
- that represents the next logical step for your host supervisor
- that fails to make clear *your* intellectual contribution



HFSP Postdoctoral Fellowships

Next Call for Applications

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Application site opens March 2026

Initiation of Letters of Intent: **6 May 2026**

Submission of Letters of Intent: **12 May 2026**

Submission Invited Full Proposals: September 2026

Award announcement: end-March 2026

Look here:

<https://www.hfsp.org/funding/hfsp-funding/postdoctoral-fellowships>



HFSP Contacts & Helpful Resources

Website: www.hfsp.org

Research Grants:
grant@hfsp.org

Fellowships:
fellow@hfsp.org

Thank you! – Questions?

