

1907

R E S E A R C H

1907 TRAILBLAZER AWARD Request for Applications

January 31, 2020 (modified February 23, 2020)

About the 1907 Trailblazer Award

The 1907 Trailblazer Award was established to encourage high-impact, step-change approaches to research in the brain and mind sciences for mental health. In addition to supporting a specific research project, the Award intends to increase the size of the talent pool of early career investigators researching causes & cures for mental illness. We promote these aims by providing a US\$100,000 research gift on an unrestricted basis, a US\$20,000 prize to enhance the economic security of the scientist, and travel & expense coverage for attendance at two annual meetings. Each winner will be invited to two annual meetings to present interim findings (year 1) and final findings (year 2), where they can form scientific relationships with other Award winners, our Advisory Board Directors and Research Directors. We aim to build community and provide value to the scientist in excess of the monetary element.

At 1907 Research, we have a small [team](#) of Advisory Board Directors, Research Directors and Administration with representation across disciplines (including both finance and science), institutions and geographies. We foster a culture of innovation, we encourage risk-taking and we assess applications purely based on their merit. In this vein, we hope to attract scientists who can think creatively across disciplines and who are motivated to swim against the tides of consensus.

Projects must be grounded in the study of biological mechanisms underlying brain function, cognitive processes, and/or consciousness. We support projects for basic science in addition to near-term applications (e.g. disruptive technologies and potential clinical interventions).

Application Process and Timeline

The application process will take place in four stages:

- 1) **Application process begins with public release of RFA (on January 31, 2020).** We encourage the administration of interested institutions to broadcast the RFA to their faculties and run internal competitions. The Award is open to all universities/research institutions in the US, the UK or Canada.
- 2) **Application deadline for each university/research institution to select up to two winning candidates (by April 30, 2020).** Institutions should select the two most appropriate applications for submission to 1907 Research, decided via internal competition. Selection criteria should emphasize identification of disruptive ideas in alignment with 1907 Research's [values](#). To progress, each identified candidate will require a letter of support from their department chair (or equivalent). Institutional research administration contacts who [register](#) will receive passcodes from 1907 Research by April 30, 2020, which can then be

provided to selected candidates for access to 1907 Research's application portal.

- 3) **Identified applicants submit application to 1907 Research (by May 31, 2020).** Applicants will use their passcodes to gain access to the [application portal](#) on the website by April 30, 2020. Candidates will then submit their application, resume/CV (with publication list) along with a series of short-form questions (including considerations related to i. sex, gender and diversity, ii. ethics and iii. confidentiality) directly through the portal. Applications will be reviewed by 1907 Research, and shortlisted candidates will be contacted via email for remote interviews.
- 4) **Award recipients selected and announced (by September 30, 2020).** Three Award winners will be selected and announced by September 30, 2020.

All deadlines are at 23:59 local time for the applicant.

Application Questions

The application is centered on a (maximum) four page "novel idea." In the four pages, the applicant must explicitly address the following four questions (word count allocation to each question at discretion of the applicant):

- 1) **What is the novel idea and what is the potential impact to the field?** Explain the novel idea in lay terms. What does it hope to achieve? How can it empower others in the field to identify causes & cures?
- 2) **What is the scientific rationale of the idea given current gaps in knowledge?** Concise explanations are preferred.
- 3) **What is your execution plan and why are you uniquely positioned to execute?** What tools, resources and relationships do you have to enable you to complete the research? How do you anticipate the US\$100,000 research gift to be used?
- 4) **Why is 1907 Research best positioned to partner with you?** Explain why your project requires dedicated unrestricted funding and why it would not be likely to be funded from traditional sources (universities, governments, other established foundations).

FAQ

How many Awards will be made?

In the inaugural year, 1907 Research will select three recipients.

What kind of research is supported?

Applications for the 1907 Trailblazer Award should describe programs of work that aim to improve knowledge and outcomes of psychiatric illness through brain-mind research. Eligible disciplines include but are not limited to neuroscience, neurology, psychology, psychiatry, cognitive neuroscience, clinical psychology, computational neuroscience, neuroimaging, genetics and engineering (including novel technologies and devices). We particularly encourage research that involves human patients, but projects can also focus on well-validated animal models, and/or on psychiatrically-relevant research in healthy humans or conceptual/theoretical work. The projects can be framed around a single disorder or can be transdiagnostic, e.g. with an emphasis on shared risk factors (genetic or environmental) or common neural substrates. For

projects in basic science, applicants who provide an in-depth understanding of the disorder(s) they are trying to treat will be prioritized.

The key criterion in assessing applications will be the extent to which research programs bring us closer to causes & cures based on an enhanced understanding of how aberrant neurobiological and/or psychological mechanisms give rise to behavioral (objective) and psychological (subjective) symptoms. A good example of this approach is provided by the emerging discipline of computational psychiatry, which aims at uncovering the neurobiological mechanisms underlying psychiatric symptoms. By contrast, research programs that simply test the efficacy of an existing intervention are poorly aligned with our aims. Similarly, applications that follow established research paradigms - for example, using standard analytic tools on large public imaging databases - are not suitable for this call.

Step-change research is risky but it should also be robust. The Award seeks to build a community of researchers where failed hypotheses are encouraged and where open science practices are embraced. We encourage research programs that emphasize the reliability and reproducibility of scientific findings, and provide (where possible) open access to data, methods and research papers.

Projects should represent new lines of research and be distinct from other research projects conducted by the investigator. This competition encourages innovative, unorthodox and exploratory research that may be in the early and conceptual stages of project development, but has potential for significant impact on our understanding of the brain. The generated data will enable early-career investigators to apply for larger gifts that will lead to long-term projects and create innovative and sustainable research programs.

Am I eligible?

- Applicants must be within ten years of the date when PhD/MD degree was awarded (whichever came later and with exceptions for maternity leave, paternity leave and other excused absences)
- Applicants will currently be employed by a university or public research institute in the US, the UK, or Canada, with full-time employment guaranteed for the duration of the project (tenure or tenure-track and international equivalents). Applicants must already work in a supervisory role (PhD, MD, Postdoctoral supervisor primary or secondary)
- Applicants will have demonstrated independence from senior colleagues. They must be able to initiate and direct their own research as principal investigator, have full responsibility for running their labs and full control of their research funds. Postdoctoral researchers working primarily in another investigator's research group, as well as adjunct faculty, are not eligible to apply
- Applicants will have a strong track record of scientific publications relevant to their research program
- Research applications may be related to but cannot be identical to any other currently funded projects

What can the funding be used for?

Awards of US\$100,000 will be made to successful applicants, via their institutions, for research costs. Funding is to be spent over a two-year duration and can support:

- Stipends for research staff within the Award recipient's lab
- Equipment, supplies, laboratory costs and/or technician
- Imaging costs
- Publication fees
- Patient participant expenses
- Travel

In addition to the US\$100,000, US\$20,000 will be awarded as a cash prize payable directly to the recipient (50% after year 1, 50% after year 2). Lastly, 1907 Research will cover travel & expenses to two annual meetings.

What is required in the letter from the department head?

Upon selection of the two candidates, the department head (or higher administrative level) at each institution is required to provide a one-page letter of reference attesting to the applicant's suitability for the Award. The letter will be submitted via the online portal beginning on April 30, 2020. The letter should attest to the institution's commitment to supporting the applicant's project, including any additional or in-kind commitment of resources, including but not limited to relief from teaching/admin duties.

As a charitable organization, we prefer that institutions do not apply indirect costs or overheads to these awards. We ask that applicants gain the agreement of their department head that the Award can be used by the Awardee. If some contribution to indirect costs is needed, the letter of support should state how much of the US\$100,000 will be used in this way and explain why.

What reporting is required by the applicant?

We aim to be light touch in order to minimize the amount of time candidates spend on administrative reporting. The recipients will be invited to the annual meeting to present interim findings (year 1) and final findings (year 2). Within six months of the end date for the Award (the two-year period), we request final financial and scientific reports.

How will proposals be assessed?

Applications will be adjudicated by the Advisory Board Directors and Research Directors and scored based on overall quality and alignment with the aims of the Award program. Shortlisted applications will be notified by email.

Contact Information

For more information, or if you have any questions regarding the application process, please [e-mail us](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#)