



CHAN ZUCKERBERG Biohub New York

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

2026 Chan Zuckerberg Biohub New York Investigator Program

The Chan Zuckerberg Biohub New York invites applications to support investigators at its partnering institutions (Columbia University, Yale University, and The Rockefeller University) to perform research related to harnessing and/or bioengineering immune cells.

OPPORTUNITY

Overview

The immune system provides a powerful natural platform for disease detection, surveillance, and response—but remains vastly underutilized as a programmable system for health monitoring and therapeutic intervention. Despite significant progress in genomics, diagnostics, immunology, and synthetic biology, we still lack the tools to fully engineer immune cells to perform modular sensing, actuation, and diagnostic tasks. Most diseases are diagnosed only after symptoms emerge, often too late for intervention. There is a need for technological advances that harness immune cells for programmable disease monitoring, organ-specific trafficking, and therapeutic response before pathology progresses.

Led by the Chan Zuckerberg Biohub New York (CZ Biohub NY), CZI has set forth a Grand Challenge to harness and bioengineer immune cells for the early detection, prevention, and treatment of a broad spectrum of age-related diseases, including neurodegenerative disorders and aggressive cancers. CZ Biohub NY brings together its intramural teams with extramural investigators from Yale, Columbia, and The Rockefeller University to empower high-risk, high-reward research amidst a collaborative research community to accelerate the pace of scientific discovery.

The Investigator Award Program is designed to identify and support visionary scientists by providing them with unrestricted funding to pursue their most innovative and high-impact research projects that align with the mission of CZ Biohub NY. Awardees will become part of our vibrant, collaborative, and supportive research community, gaining access to cutting-edge tools, expertise, and training opportunities. The focus of their research will be on deciphering the

molecular language of immune cells, enabling these cells to be deployed for disease detection, prevention, and treatment.

Objectives

The CZ Biohub NY Investigator Program aims to:

- **Empower High-Risk, High-Reward Research:** Support groundbreaking research projects that are not currently funded through traditional academic channels but have the potential to significantly advance our understanding of immune cell biology and disease.
- **Build a Collaborative Research Community:** Foster and sustain an engaged, interactive, and collaborative community of researchers across relevant scientific disciplines and institutions, facilitated through regular Biohub Investigator meetings, workshops, and events.
- **Accelerate the Pace of Scientific Discovery:** Ensure rapid dissemination of research findings by uploading all manuscripts, where the investigator is the corresponding author, to preprint servers such as bioRxiv.org or arXiv.org. Additionally, make all relevant data accessible to the research community upon submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

Areas of Interest

This RFA will seek studies of the immune system consistent with the broad objectives of the Grand Challenge with the CZ Biohub NY's institutional partners. For instance, these may include:

- Elucidation and development of genetic (or pharmacologic) control of mechanisms underlying immune cell organ tropism and tissue residency,
- Engineering of immune cells capable of detecting and/or recording specific signals from the organs they encounter in healthy and various disease states, including in a time-dependent fashion,
- Engineering T-cell receptors (TCRs) responsive to novel antigens, for instance, to detect the presence of “cold” (i.e., sub-immunogenic) tumors or neurodegenerative diseases, and to couple them with cell-intrinsic mechanisms not necessarily aimed at inducing antigen-mediated cell death,
- Developing novel mechanisms providing a non-invasive readout of immune cell state, and
- Elucidating the cell-cell communication processes that support the ability of immune cells to work in concert as a complex system.

Studies that generate critical data to generate or train AI models of the immune system will be prioritized to accelerate the pace of scientific breakthroughs and support the development of virtual cells and/or the virtual immune system.

These are just examples of potential topics of interest – potential investigators should refer to [our website](#) to learn more about the overarching goals of the CZ Biohub NY to identify additional areas of potential interest.

Award Details & Program Features

Selected investigators will receive:

- **Flexible Funding:** Each investigator award will be funded at \$200,000 per year in direct costs for three years, awarded as gift funds to their respective institutions, and will include an additional eight percent for indirect costs (\$216,000/yr total costs for a total award of \$648,000 total costs over three years).
 - Awards may be renewable for an additional two years beyond the initial three years at the same annual funding level. This is contingent on satisfactory progress and reporting to be determined by the end of year three.
 - Funds are disbursed as unrestricted gift funds to respective institutions. Funds are intended to be used toward salary support and operational costs to support the project, including consumables, core facilities access, materials for the research, and other costs related to the project. It is recommended that no more than 10 percent of the total budget is directed towards capital expense equipment.
- **Research Freedom:** The flexibility to pursue innovative research directions without the constraints typically associated with traditional grant funding.
- **Access to Chan Zuckerberg Biohub Network Resources:** Opportunities to collaborate with other CZ Biohub NY investigators, access to cutting-edge technologies, and participation in CZ Biohub NY events and workshops. Investigators will also have the opportunity to engage with the Chan Zuckerberg Biohub Network.
- **Collaborative Environment:** A supportive community of like-minded scientists dedicated to pushing the boundaries of biomedical research.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Eligible Investigators must:

- Hold a faculty position at one of CZ Biohub NY's partnering institutions (Columbia University, The Rockefeller University, or Yale University).
- Submit only one application per Request for Applications (RFA) cycle.
- Not currently hold an active CZ Biohub NY Investigator Award at the time the new awards are funded (please refer to key dates below).
- Commit to attending Investigator meetings, which are held twice monthly (50% virtual, 50% in person).
- Provide an annual report summarizing research output and impact for each year the award is active.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Key Dates:

- September 30, 2025: Application portal opens at 12 pm ET
- October 23, 2025: [Information session](#) from 1 - 2 pm ET
- December 9, 2025: Applications due by 5 pm ET
- Mid March 2026: Earliest notification of decisions (subject to change)
- April 1, 2026: Expected award start date (subject to change)

Award period and start date:

Awards will be three years (36 months) in duration with an expected start date of April 1, 2026. Awards may be renewable for an additional two years beyond the initial three years at the same annual funding level. This is contingent on satisfactory progress and reporting and will be determined by the end of year three.

SELECTION PROCESS

Applications will undergo a peer review process across a set of CZ Biohub NY and CZI Investigators and will be considered for scientific merit, alignment to the CZ Biohub NY Grand Challenge, degree of innovation, feasibility, and PI qualifications. The CZ Biohub NY Steering Committee will review these evaluations with a recommendation to internal CZ Biohub NY and CZI leadership for funding investigators. Notification of decisions is anticipated by mid March 2026 (subject to change).

USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) TOOLS

CZI supports the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools to facilitate the drafting and preparation of grant proposals and to support grant reviews in ways that ensure the integrity and confidentiality of the grantmaking process, protect user privacy, and preserve the individual accountability and responsibility of each applicant and reviewer. Please read our [full guidelines](#) on AI for grant applicants.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All submitted applications will be kept confidential, except (1) as necessary for our evaluation or to comply with any applicable laws; (2) to the extent that the application is made public or available to others without a duty of confidentiality through no fault of CZ Biohub NY; or (3) to share application data with the applicant's home institution. Notwithstanding the foregoing, certain information, including brief summaries of the proposed projects, project metrics, and types of organizations that have applied for funding, may be made publicly available in aggregate form. Proposals that are selected by CZ Biohub NY for funding may be made publicly available and/or shared with other grantees or collaborators. Application materials will not be returned to applicants.

Personal data: Where we ask for personal data of individuals in grant applications, please only

submit personal data that you have the right to provide. We will use and store any personal data collected through the application process for grant-related purposes (e.g., administering the grant, analyzing and improving our grant practices). The Chan Zuckerberg Initiative Foundation, Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, LLC and Chan Zuckerberg Biohub Network (collectively “CZI”) will be the “data controllers” for any such personal information, and the data may be stored on servers outside of your home country, including within the United States. You can find more information about our privacy practices [here](#). If you have any questions or concerns regarding our privacy practices or the collection or use of personal data, you can contact us at privacy@chanzuckerberg.com.

Detailed Application Instructions

The Chan Zuckerberg Biohub New York uses SurveyMonkey Apply as its grants management portal. All applications must be submitted through this portal (<https://apply.chanzuckerberg.com>). SMAppl is configured to work best using the Google Chrome browser. It is recommended that you familiarize yourself with this portal well in advance of any deadlines. Deadline extensions will not be granted.

To complete and submit an application:

1. Go to <https://apply.chanzuckerberg.com>.
2. Register and/or log in.
3. Click on the **Programs** link in the upper right corner.
4. Find the **2026 Chan Zuckerberg Biohub New York Investigator Program** and click **More**.
5. Click the green **Apply** button in the upper right corner.
6. **Enter the title** of your application, after which you will have access to the application tasks to complete. Please enter your name (first name last name) as the application title.
7. Complete the sections below and **submit by no later than 5 p.m. Eastern Time on December 9, 2025**.

The application consists of the following sections (called tasks in the grants portal):

Applicant Details, Project Summary, Project Proposal, Applicant CV/Biosketch, Bibliography of Major Papers, Three Most Significant Papers, and Statement of Support.

- **Applicant Details:**

- Name and email (auto-filled): To edit your name or email, please do so in your account information by clicking your name in the upper right corner and clicking My Account in the dropdown menu.
- Degrees (check all that apply)
- Current Institution (Columbia University, The Rockefeller University, Yale University)
- Current Department Affiliation / Current Title at Institution
- Which best describes your area of research? Biology/Biological Sciences, Chemistry, Computational/Data Science, Engineering, Physics, Other

- ORCID iD: Enter in format XXXX-XXXX-XXXX-XXXX. (ORCID iDs are unique, digital identifiers that distinguish individual scientists and unambiguously connect their contributions to science over time and across changes of name, location, and institutional affiliation. For more information and to register, please visit <https://orcid.org/register>.)
- **Project Summary:**
 - **Project Title:** Auto-filled; limited to 60 characters, including spaces. If you need to edit your project title, navigate to your application summary page, click on the three dots to the right of the application title (next to the Preview link), and select Rename from the dropdown menu.
 - **Project Purpose:** One sentence describing your proposed research. Please use a third-person voice (maximum of 200 characters including spaces)
 - *Example: “To develop a dissemination pathway for light sheet microscopy in Southeast Asia, focused on understanding the dynamics of immune-pathogen interactions.”*
 - **Summary of Proposed Research** (maximum length of 250 words). Describe your project. Please use a third-person voice.
- **Project Proposal:** Upload your project proposal as a single PDF; the font must be 11 point or larger, and margins must be at least one-half inch (top, bottom, left, and right) for all pages (letter size required). The proposal can be up to 1,500 words (approximately three pages), should outline risky and innovative research you wish to pursue, and include the following sections:
 - **Scientific Proposal:**
 - Introduction/Rationale
 - Proposed Research Plan (pilot data is not required for this award opportunity)
 - Potential for Impact
 - Optional: Link(s) to ongoing work with CZ Biohub NY
 - **Figures/Preliminary Data** (optional): Limited to two pages, including legends. Figure legends do not count toward the word limit.
 - **References Cited in Your Proposal:** No word/page limit; include complete source references. References do not count towards the page or word limit.
- **Applicant CV/Biosketch:** Upload CV or NIH-style [biosketch](#) (maximum of 5 pages) in PDF format. Please include Personal Statement, Positions, Scientific Appointments, Honors, and Key Publications and Impact.
- **Bibliography of Major Papers:** Upload in PDF format (maximum of one page).
- **Three Most Significant Papers:** Upload copies of three of your most significant research papers relevant to the proposal in PDF format. You may upload one combined PDF containing all three publications or three separate PDFs, one for each publication.

- **Statement of Support:** Upload a signed statement of support from their division or department chair confirming that the applicant has the space, resources, and support necessary for the proposed research program. Please note that by submitting the statement of support and this application, you consent to having your application data shared with your home institution. **Note: digital signatures are permitted as long as the document is not encrypted or password-protected.**

CONTACT

For administrative and programmatic inquiries, or other questions pertaining to this RFA, please contact sciencegrants@chanzuckerberg.com.