

Two-Year SPARC Awards to Catalyze Brain Health Research

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How is this different from an NIH-style grant?

The SPARC awards will support the assembly of multidisciplinary teams of outstanding investigators in order to enable them to solve the most pressing challenges in human health that are within the scope of the current request. Because solving these challenges will require more time and more resources than provided by these SPARC awards, PIs and their teams must make the case for how this SPARC will get them started.

2. How many awards will be given out?

There is no pre-determined limit. The final number will depend upon the budgets of the most meritorious applications.

3. What makes a team “multidisciplinary”?

Representation of multiple departments or divisions, different training backgrounds or areas of clinical or technical expertise, and different areas along the research spectrum (basic, translational, clinical) are all good examples.

4. Can the proposed research involve human subjects or laboratory animals?

Yes. IRB and/or IACUC approval will be necessary before studies can begin.

5. Is the award open to existing teams of collaborators, new teams, or both?

Both, although preference may be given to new collaborations. If the project builds on an existing collaboration, it must measurably strengthen the team and address a new scientific question that falls within the scope of the RFA.

6. Does the PI need to belong to any particular department?

No. Investigators from all MGH departments are encouraged to apply.

7. Are co-PIs / multiple PIs allowable?

Yes. In the Key Personnel section, please specify the unique contributions of each PI to the project and describe how their complementary expertise is essential for the project's success.

8. Do all team members need to have MGH staff appointments?

PIs/Co-PIs must have their primary appointment at MGH.

Subcontracts to investigators at other institutions are allowed. However, Partners policies on the subcontract indirect collection will apply. Additionally, the awards will carry a maximum reimbursement of 15% for indirect cost. Please work with your Grants Administrator to properly account for subcontract costs in the budget.

9. Can postdoctoral fellows apply?

Postdoctoral fellows cannot serve as a PI or Co-PI, but may be included within study staff and can receive salary support.

10. Can co-directors of Mass General Neuroscience or the McCance Center apply?

Not as PI/Co-PI, but they can be included as co-investigators. Directors will be recused from evaluations of applications where they have a potential conflict of interest. Other Steering Committee members can apply as PI/Co-PI but will be recused from reviews of specific applications if potential conflicts exist.

11. Can I propose an award for any amount up to \$150,000?

Yes, as long as the budget is well justified and the total award does not exceed \$150,000 (including 15% indirect costs) over a 1-year or 2-year period.

12. Does the same amount need to be budgeted for each year of the award?

No, as long as year-to-year differences are justified in the Proposed Budget section. Awards will be one or two year awards with option for renewal in future SPRAC rounds.

13. Will applicants receive feedback?

Although scores will not be shared, feedback will be made available to applicants upon request.

14. Whom should I contact with additional questions?

Email neuroscience@mgh.harvard.edu with additional questions.