

## HBI Postdoctoral Pioneers Program

Postdoctoral fellows are the lifeblood of biomedical research labs. They often develop or adapt new technologies and experimental paradigms, which allow their labs to address research questions that were previously intractable. They also can be the driving force behind a lab's entry into a new research area.

Recognizing that innovation frequently occurs at the interface of different disciplines and requires labs to venture out of established areas of expertise, the Harvard Brain Science Initiative (HBI) aims to support postdocs who serve as pioneers in their labs by taking on new or risky projects. [The HBI Postdoctoral Pioneers Program](#) offers **\$50,000 fellowships to mid- to late-stage postdocs who are conducting basic neuroscience research in areas outside of their lab's established focus.**

These fellowships may be used over a period of one to two years. They are meant to be flexible and enhance productivity at a critical time in the postdoc's career. Expenses that are covered include (as examples) postdoc salary, the salary of a technician directly supporting the postdoc's project, professional development opportunities, and/or specialized research supplies needed for the postdoc's project. Please note that no F&A expenses can be covered by this mechanism.

**We anticipate awarding 5 or 6 fellowships in this cycle.**

Awardees will be chosen based on scientific excellence, commitment to the work proposed, extent to which the work is truly pioneering for the lab, and consideration of funding impact on applicant's research progress and career. Personal circumstances may also be taken into account.

[You can read about past awardees here.](#)

### Eligibility

- This program is open to postdoctoral fellows who are conducting neuroscience research in labs at Harvard University, in FAS or HMS Quad basic science departments.
  - Examples of relevant FAS science departments include (but not necessarily restricted to) Molecular and Cellular Biology, Psychology, Organismic and Evolutionary Biology, Chemistry and Chemical Biology, Physics, Human Evolutionary Biology.
  - HMS Quad basic science departments are Neurobiology, Cell Biology, Genetics, Immunology, Microbiology, Systems Biology, Biological Chemistry and Molecular Pharmacology, as well as the University-wide Stem Cell and Regenerative Biology Department. Postdocs in hospital labs are eligible only if the PI has a faculty appointment in one of the Quad Basic Science Departments listed above.
- To be eligible, the postdoc must have completed at least two years of full-time postdoctoral work in their lab by 1/2/26.

- **Each lab may nominate only one postdoc per application cycle.**
    - If a postdoc is co-mentored, the primary mentor would count as the sponsor, and we would assume the primary mentor is the one whose lab pays the postdoc. (If there is any ambiguity in this area, please contact us ahead of time to discuss.)
    - While applications from all eligible labs will be considered, when all other things are equal, priority may be given to labs which did not receive funding in the last cycle.
  - Individuals who have received an HBI pioneer grant in past rounds are not eligible to apply again
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### **Application Deadlines**

- Letters of intent are due Wed Oct 15<sup>th</sup> 2025
- Full applications are due Wed Nov 12<sup>th</sup> 2025
- Decisions will be made in Dec/January
- Grants will likely begin in Feb/March 2026

*Please note that we are unable to provide extensions.*

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### **How to Apply**

#### **Letter of Intent (LOI), due Wed Oct 15th:**

Letters of intent are required for us to confirm your eligibility and develop an appropriately-sized review committee.

You can fill out the LOI form here: [https://hms.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_1SWoy83iZmAtEgK](https://hms.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1SWoy83iZmAtEgK)

This form will ask you to provide a short proposal title and an abstract of 200 words or fewer that describes your proposed research, how it relates to the lab's interests as a whole and what you feel makes it pioneering for the lab.

*You will receive an auto-confirmation of your submission from Qualtrics right away. If you don't receive that, please check in with us before the LOI deadline has passed.*

*We will send an email confirming your eligibility to apply within 3 business days. Please check back if you do not hear from us in this timeframe.*

### Full Application, due Wed Nov 12th:

Once your eligibility is confirmed, you will receive a link to the application portal. Please create a PDF file to upload there with the following pieces, in the following order and your name in footer of each page:

- **Applicant Research Description**, two pages or less, briefly introducing your research project, its major aims, progress made so far, and big picture significance. Explain clearly how the proposed research is pioneering for your lab.
  - Please avoid jargon and write for a broad audience; not all reviewers will be experts in your sub-field of neuroscience.
  - Use one-inch margins, font size of 11 points or larger.
  - Simple figures may be included if desired, as long as they fit within the two-page limit.
  - A short list of references may also be included. References can be on a separate page.
- **Budget Request**, roughly one paragraph describing how you would use the funds if you were awarded this fellowship. If you have been awarded any other fellowships, please note those here, including the award period and expenses covered, and explain any potential overlap. (Also, please note that no F&A expenses can be covered by this mechanism.)
- **Personal Statement**, 250 words max, describing your career goals, what stage you are at in your postdoctoral training, and how receiving this funding would make an impact on your work
- **NIH Biosketch** (Use this form: <https://brain.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/biosketch-blank-format-rev-10-2021.docx>)
- **Advisor Statement of Support**, one page, describing scientific merits of the postdoc's work and their talents, providing context on how the proposed work fits into the lab's overall goals, and explaining why it is pioneering. Please also share the impact you expect this funding to have on the postdoc's career, as well as your lab.

Before submitting, please save your PDF with **Last Name\_First Name as the file name**.

### **Note you will be asked for the following financial information when completing the application:**

The name and email address of your lab's grant manager, as well as your lab's TUB, ORG and ROOT numbers (except for labs where the primary affiliation is a hospital).

*You will receive an auto-confirmation of your submission from Qualtrics right away. If you don't receive that, please check in with us before the application deadline has passed.*

*Within three business days you will also receive a manual email from [HBI\\_Grants@harvard.edu](mailto:HBI_Grants@harvard.edu) confirming your application is complete. Please check back if you do not hear from us in this timeframe.*

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### **Questions?**

Please reach out to Parizad Bilimoria at [HBI\\_Grants@harvard.edu](mailto:HBI_Grants@harvard.edu).