



# Foundation Funding for Early Career Faculty in the Biomedical Sciences

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Assist PI-eligible VU faculty and staff submitting grant proposals

Work across **all Schools, Centers, and Institutes**

Facilitate **large/complicated submissions & proposals of all sizes**

**Diversify** funding portfolios (federal / foundation)

Manage **limited submissions** and **internal funding** programs

**Coordinate** with

- DAR for **family foundations**
- CTTC for **corporate opportunities**
- **Provost's** and **Chancellor's** offices  
for large initiatives & letters of support

# Why Foundation Funding Matters



Diversify  
Funding



Fuel  
Innovation



Early  
Validation



Strategic  
Steppingstone



# Foundation vs. Federal Funding Overview



	Private Foundations	Federal Grants (e.g., NIH)
Purpose & Focus	Mission-driven, innovative, niche areas	Public health priorities, broad biomedical scope
Eligibility	Targeted, often by invitation or nomination	Open, competitive peer review
Funding Amount	Smaller, shorter duration	Larger, longer duration
Flexibility	High—less bureaucracy, adaptable scope	Lower—strict regulations and reporting
Prestige & Impact	Strategic visibility, fosters innovation	Career-defining, essential for tenure
Review Process	Mixed panels (scientists + stakeholders)	Peer-reviewed by study sections



# Types of Nonfederal Funders



- Disease/Patient-Focused Nonprofits
  - American Cancer Society, Breakthrough T1D, Alzheimer's Association, Retirement Research Foundation
- Professional Societies
  - American Society of Hematology, American Psychological Association
- Biomedical Science Philanthropic Foundations
  - Beckman Foundation
  - Pew Charitable Trusts
  - Mathers Foundation
  - Packard Foundation
  - Rita Allen Foundation
  - Sloan Foundation
  - McKnight Foundation



# Key Features of Early Career Foundation Awards



## High-Risk, High-Reward

Encourages bold, innovative research (e.g., Beckman, Rita Allen) that pushes boundaries.



## Early Independence

Targets new tenure-track faculty to establish and launch independent research programs.



## Flexible, Multiyear Funding

Typically \$100K–\$600K over 2–5 years with fewer restrictions on scope.



## Prestige & Visibility

Highly competitive awards (e.g., Pew, Packard, Packard, Sloan) boost career trajectory and recognition.



## Interdisciplinary/Collaborative

Promotes cross-disciplinary work and partnerships (e.g., McKnight, Klingenstein).



## Mission-Driven Selection

Each foundation has unique goals and priorities that guide their funding decisions (e.g., Mathers, Mallinckrodt).



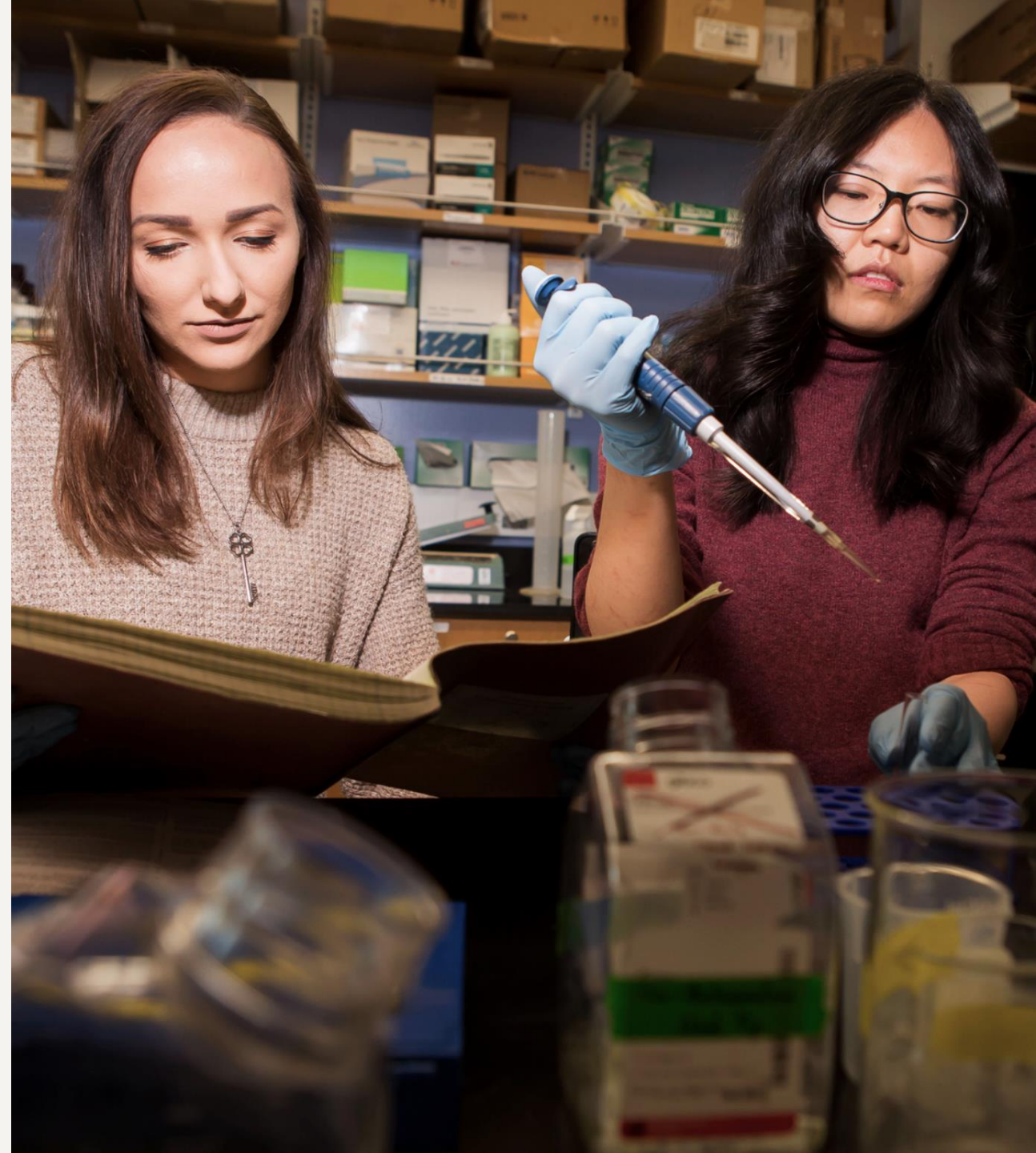
## Limited Nomination

Many require institutional nomination or are invitation-only, highlighting exclusivity.



# What Makes a Competitive Applicant

- Clear, compelling research vision
- Strong mentorship and institutional environment
- Alignment with funder's mission
- Evidence of productivity and potential
- Thoughtful career development plan



# Tips for Applying

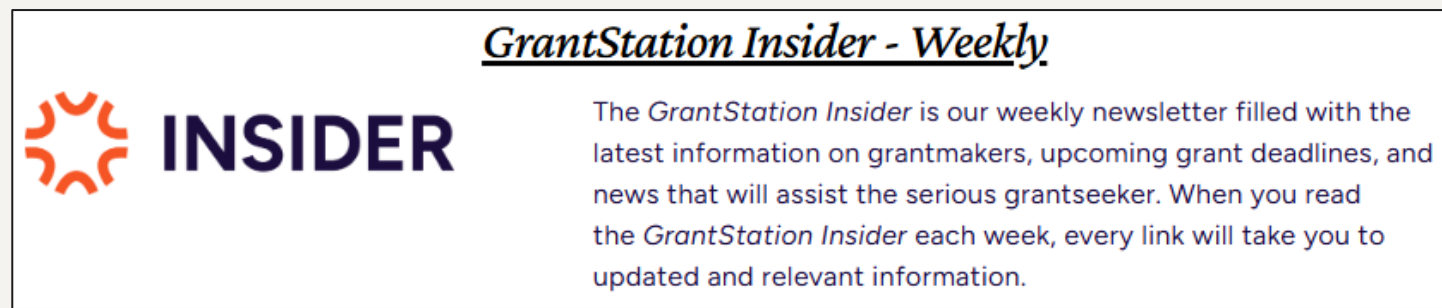
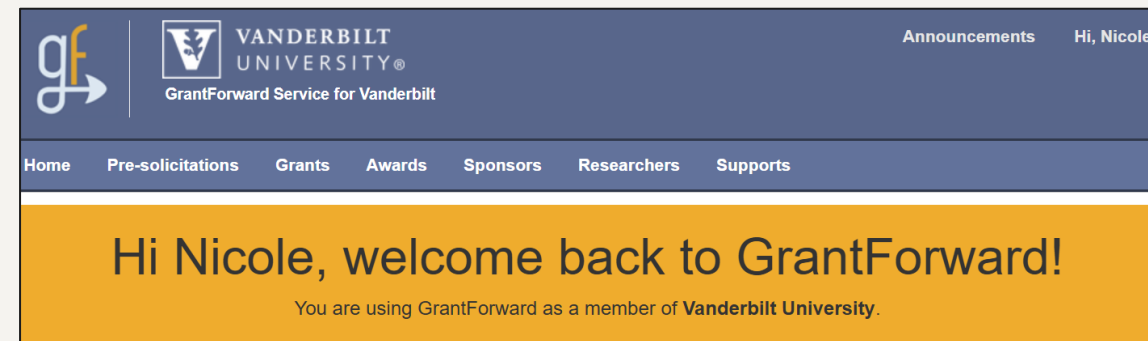
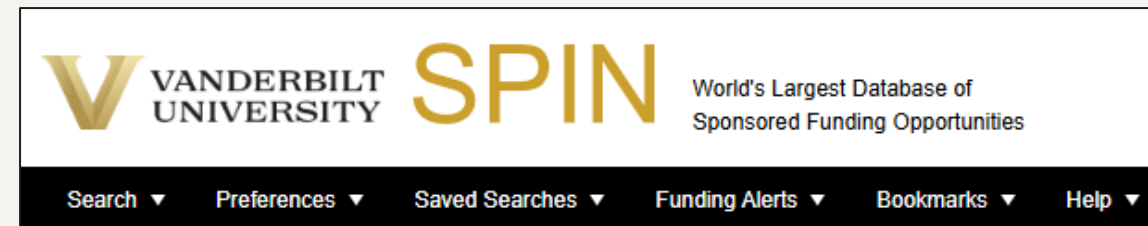
- Start early and read guidelines carefully
  - PI eligibility, limited submission, LOI vs. full application, submission logistics, budgetary allowances, institutional approvals/endorsements, etc.
- Tailor your proposal to the foundation's priorities
  - Subject matter/disciplinary boundaries, how translational/applied vs. basic, commercialization potential required, patient-facing/community component, etc.?
- Use plain language and compelling storytelling
  - Articulate the gap/problem you're addressing, clear objectives/aims with justification
- Highlight innovation and impact
  - Immediate contributions to your field and potentially longer-term implications
- Seek internal review and feedback
  - People in and outside of your field bring different strengths



# Finding Foundation Grant Opportunities



- [VU-Subscribed Databases](#)
  - GrantForward, Foundation Directory, [SPIN](#)
- Foundation Websites
  - Direct listings and newsletters
- Newsletters from third-party sites
  - [Candid's Philanthropy News Digest](#), [Grantstation](#)
- RD or Advancement office
  - Targeted searches, newsletters





# Using Funding Databases Effectively

- Use filters for career stage, discipline, and funder type
- Leverage keyword strategies
- Set up funding alerts and saved searches
- Attend workshops or request 1:1 support

Sponsors

Sponsor's Country

Categories

Include Category Name...

List

Developmental Neurobiology

Neurosciences

Deadline

Status

Amount

Sponsor Types

Federal/National

State/Provincial

Professional Association/Society

Foundation

Corporate

Academic

International

Other

Grant Types

Fellowship / Scholarship / Dissertation

Found 30 results in 0.28 seconds.

Show 10 Items per Page Sort by Relevance

Export

Save/Load

Url

In categories: *Developmental Neurobiology, Neurosciences*

With current status: *Continuous, Open*

Currency: *USD*

Of sponsor types: *Foundation, Professional Association/Society*

Of grant types: *Research Project*

With applicant locations: *United States*, including unspecified grants

With activity locations: *United States*, including unspecified grants

With applicant types: *Individual Applicant, Organization Applica...*

# When to Apply for Early Career Foundation Funding



- You can start applying during the first year of your faculty role
  - First 1-3 years are critical for eligibility
  - Keep an eye on internal LSO competitions
- ‘Early career’ defined different ways
  - Number of years since you earned your PhD (e.g., 8-10 years)
  - Number of years since you began your faculty role (e.g., 3-4 years)
  - At the ‘assistant professor’ rank or ‘ untenured’
- Consider timing with other funding
  - E.g., Having R01-equivalent funding could make you ineligible for some foundation awards





# Resources and Support



- Research Development Office
  - Proposal review, targeted funding searches, strategy sessions
- Libraries
  - Access to databases and search support
- Mentors and Peers
  - Internal knowledge sharing, outside readers
- Professional Societies
  - Career development resources, networking

# Final Thoughts

- Foundation funding is a strategic steppingstone, not a 1:1 replacement for federal funding
- Start early and stay organized
- Build relationships and seek support
- Questions?

