

Vanderbilt-wide Limited Submission Opportunity

2026 Ono Pharma Breakthrough Science Initiative Awards

Applications due January 6, 2026

Vanderbilt (VU + VUMC): *This is a joint competition for VU and VUMC investigators. All investigators should follow these instructions.*

Overview:

Vanderbilt (VU + VUMC, combined) may nominate **2 candidates** to submit an LOI to the Ono Pharma Foundation's [Breakthrough Science Initiative Awards Program](#).

Ono Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd. is a leading global healthcare company committed to delivering new, innovative pharmaceutical products to patients and championing the fight against disease and pain. The Ono Pharma Foundation was established to support academic research in relevant scientific fields, which have the potential of making significant impact on therapeutic approaches to disease and pain management.

The "Ono Initiative" is the embodiment of the Foundation's commitment to focus on and accelerate researcher-driven open innovation by supporting **high-risk and high-reward science research projects which have potential to lead to science discoveries/solutions** and, possibly, based on further research, to breakthrough treatments for patients. The program seeks proposals for research that could ultimately transform human health.

Although additional areas of research may be added in future years, in 2026 the Ono Pharma Foundation will only consider proposals for scientific research projects addressing the following field of science:

Chemical Biology Research

- Target research of Chemical Biology is not specified. Chemical Biology is defined as research that deals with the interface between chemistry and biology. The criteria for this field are deliberately broad so as not to disqualify potentially innovative and groundbreaking projects.
- Subjects of interest include, but are not limited to:
 - Modulating interactome and cell/tissue crosstalk
 - Manipulating biomolecular condensates and protein quality control systems
 - Deep understanding and emerging applications of chemical glycobiology
 - New concepts of drug delivery and localization to tissue/cell/organelle
 - Understanding and leveraging allostery in biology

Award Details:

Project duration may last up to three years with annual funding of up to \$300,000/year. The Foundation will provide up to a maximum of an additional 15% (\$45,000) per year to be used for institutional indirect costs. The total amount of the **three-year grant** is up to **\$1,035,000**.

Eligibility Requirements:

- The PI must have a MD and/or a PhD degree.
- The PI must be a new applicant to the Ono Initiative, or, if they are returning, must be applying for a project different from the one they previously proposed.
- The PI must be a young and/or mid-career scientist (15 years or less of experience from starting **independent academic position** at the date of LOI submission).
- **The PI must not have been, nor currently be, engaged in other sponsored research and/or collaborative research with Ono Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd. and/or grant program with Ono Pharma Foundation.** (Contact LSO@vanderbilt.edu with questions.)
- The PI may not apply for funding to amplify current work. However, PIs may research a new idea based on a prior finding of the PI.
- The PI must not be a healthcare professional (defined as individuals currently holding an active state license for which they are (a) qualified to prescribe, administer, use or supply any medicinal or medical products or (b) perform any professional clinical services). A PI with an MD but without an active state medical license is still eligible.
- PIs serving on a healthcare formulary or similar committee are not eligible.

For more information on the program, please refer to the [program website](#) and [FAQs](#).

Internal Application Process:

Anyone interested in being considered as Vanderbilt's potential nominee(s) must submit the following **as a single file** (in PDF format) to LSO@vanderbilt.edu by **5:00 p.m. on January 6, 2026**.

1. Vision of Proposed Research – one page, single-spaced 12pt font. Figures may be included but should not exceed an additional two pages. If there is a figure which best explains your project, please indicate which one.
2. Letter of support from department chair/center director;
3. NIH Biosketch or Brief CV (5 page max)

Submissions should reference the program name in the subject line of the email. ***All applicants should verify their eligibility in advance.***

If nominated by Vanderbilt, the PI must submit an LOI to the sponsor by February 13, 2026. If the LOI is reviewed favorably by Ono Pharma, then they will request a full proposal which will be due by May 15th, 2026.

Any questions about this opportunity or the LSO process may be directed to LSO@vanderbilt.edu.