

ACCELERATE DONOR-LED FACULTY SCIENCE GRANTS 2026 - 2027

Fall application deadline: Friday, September 25th, 2026

Accelerate Donor-Led Faculty Science Grants, established in 2025, are designed to seed bold scientific discoveries in the basic sciences by supporting innovative, potentially high-risk/high-reward research ideas backed by philanthropic members of the scientific community. All tenure-track faculty within the Division of Natural Sciences are eligible to apply.

For the 2026 application year, *Accelerate* will accept proposals for the following two initiatives:

- i. **Science Seed Fund:** Early-stage, novel research with high-reward potential, also supports mid-career faculty seeking to amplify or launch new research directions.
- ii. **Propelling Hope Research Fund:** Research related to climate science, including, but not limited to, climate change mitigation, climate ecology, and sustainable materials. Preference will be given to early-stage, high-risk/high-reward projects and to early career faculty.

Faculty members may receive more than one *Accelerate* award; however, they may not hold multiple awards at the same time. Each award has a two-year term and requires the following reporting and donor-engagement activities as a condition of award acceptance:

1. **Annual Project Update:** Managed by the A&S Development Team, in partnership with the Office of the Dean of Natural Sciences, awardees will submit an annual report (years 1 and 2) that highlights ongoing research, publications and presentations, and new grants and research avenues supported by the *Accelerate* grant. These reports will be shared with *Accelerate* donors.
2. **Annual Stewardship Event:** *Accelerate* faculty awardees, and members of their research groups who are participating in the project, will attend an annual stewardship event managed by the A&S Development Team. The event will consist of conference-style presentations by faculty awardees, followed by a reception with donors.

Applications may include budgets ranging from \$10,000 - \$75,000. Multiple awards will be made to faculty across the Division of Natural Sciences. See page 4 for more information on budget guidelines.

Considerations used in evaluation of the applications include:

Strength of the Project	• Importance and clarity of the scientific question; originality and high-risk/high-reward potential. • Soundness of the proposed approach with clearly articulated, near-term (6–12 month) milestones and a feasible 24-month plan. • Evidence that <i>Accelerate</i> support will materially change the project’s trajectory (e.g., enable “first data,” method development, or a new research direction). • Alignment with the selected initiative (Science Seed Fund or Propelling Hope).
Funding Support	• Disclosure of relevant external and internal resources (e.g., grants, discretionary, startup, departmental support) and how they do/do not cover the proposed work. • Brief justification of why <i>Accelerate</i> funds are needed now and how they complement any remaining startup or departmental resources. • Plan to leverage results into competitive external proposals (target agencies/FOAs and timeline).
Budget	• Reasonableness and direct linkage of requested costs to stated milestones and outcomes (see page 4 for guidelines).

	• Appropriate use of allowable categories (e.g., personnel, supplies/consumables, core/instrument time, minor equipment/software, essential travel for research execution, external services). • Exclusion of unallowable costs (e.g., PI salary, entertainment, general office furniture) and adherence to University travel/business policies.
--	---

Each application must include:

1. **Application cover sheet** that includes details about specific other sources of unrestricted funding that could be used for seed funding or could contribute to the proposed project, as well as funds available from the applicant's department.

Please include at the top of the cover sheet which initiative you would like your proposal to be considered for.

2. **Project description and justification (~500 words).** This should include a clear rationale for how these funds will enable the seeding of a high-risk/high-reward research idea. The project description and justification should state:
 - The problem and why it matters now (1–2 sentences, accessible to non-specialists).
 - Specific aim(s) and what makes the approach novel/high upside.
 - What you will do in the next 6–12 months (key experiments/analyses) and how success will be measured.
 - The concrete outcome(s) *Accelerate* will unlock (e.g., decisive pilot data, method/prototype) and the follow-on funding path (*i.e.*, target agency/FOA and timing).
 - Roles of team members/trainees and any cross-unit collaboration with SEAS, Climate, DSI, CUIMC, etc.).
 - Brief statement of current support and why *Accelerate* is the right instrument for this stage.
3. **Budget justification** for the requested funds. See page 4 for more details.
4. **Curriculum vitae (CV).**

Please submit the completed application to the Office of the Dean of Natural Sciences (dean-naturalsciences@columbia.edu).

ACCELERATE DONOR LED FACULTY SCIENCE GRANTS
APPLICATION FORM 2026-2027

Date: _____

Name: _____

Department: _____

Year joined Columbia Faculty: _____ Current Rank: _____

Department Address: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

Have you previously received an *Accelerate* Grant?

No () Yes, () in year(s) _____

Current Research Area(s): _____

Title/Description of Proposed Project (20 words max):

Project Timeline:

Source(s) of Current Funding for the proposed project

Do you have any additional sources of funding for this project besides FRAP? Yes () No ()

If yes, please list all, or attach a list of current and pending support for the project and the dollar amounts:

Is your department able to provide a contribution toward this project? Yes () No ()

If yes, please state the maximum dollar amount of the departmental contribution: _____

Do you have available startup funds in your account? Please state dollar amount _____

Total Support Requested from *Accelerate* Donor Led Faculty Science Funds: _____
(please see "Proposed Project Budget and Guidelines" on the last page)_

Applicant signature/date: _____

I have read this application and as Department Chair affirm my support for this project/use of funds.

Department Chair signature/date: _____

****Remember to include a current copy of your Curriculum Vitae with the application****

Please return the completed application to your Office of the Dean for the
Natural Sciences: dean-naturalsciences@adcu.columbia.edu.

**ACCELERATE DONOR LED FACULTY SCIENCE GRANTS
APPLICATION FORM 2026-2027**

Proposed Project Budget and Guidelines:

Types of research expenses to consider for your project budget include: laboratory supplies, fieldwork lodging and transportation, instrument time, computation. Proposal budget should conform with University travel and business expense policies and procedures (e.g., lodging maximums: \$350/night in U.S., \$400/night International; meal maximums: Breakfast \$25, Lunch \$35, Dinner \$75). Proposed budgets should be categorized by the expenses listed above, and itemized, if possible.

For full policies see <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/administration/policylibrary>

Funds dedicated to paying research assistants, postdocs, graduate students etc. should include estimated hours and pay rate, in addition to any related expenses (travel, accommodations, etc.). If the assistant, postdoc, or student has been selected, please include a brief description of their expertise and any previously held collaborations.