

Overview of the Michelson Prizes: Next Generation Grants

KEY DATES

- Application portal opens: April 1, 2025
- Applications due: June 22, 2025, 11:59 pm EDT (UTC -4)
- Short-listed applicants notified: Sept. 1, 2025
- Supplementary information due: October 2025 (exact date to be communicated)
- Notice of award: December 2025
- Grant cycle: January 1 -- December 31, 2026

Background

The Michelson Medical Research Foundation (MMRF) established the Michelson Prizes: Next Generation Grants (Michelson Prizes) in 2017 to support early-career investigators using disruptive research concepts and inventive processes to significantly advance the discovery of vaccines and immunotherapies for major global diseases. MMRF is collaborating with Next Frontier Advisors (NFA), a scientific consulting firm, to administer the Prizes.

The 2025 Michelson Prizes are looking for applications related to **Human Immunology and Vaccine Research**. We are interested in research that aims to tackle the current roadblocks in human vaccine development and expand our understanding of immune processes fundamental to successful vaccine and immunotherapy development. Research with potential applications across multiple disease areas and states is of particular interest.

The Michelson Prizes are intended to support individuals early in their careers who possess novel ideas and who have significant potential to execute these ideas to affect transformative change in their respective fields. Research incorporating multiplexed and non-traditional approaches from outside the fields of immunology and vaccinology and demonstrating a high degree of novelty and creative thinking is encouraged. The successful applicants will clearly articulate a vision that challenges current dogma and demonstrate an ability to look beyond convention to make a lasting impact on vaccine and immunotherapy research.

The Michelson Prizes seek to draw young investigators from a wide range of disciplines, including clinical research, biochemistry, molecular biology, protein engineering, computer science, artificial intelligence/machine learning, biophysics, nanotechnology, microbiome, tropical medicine, environmental health, etc.

Applicants must submit a 2-page description of their research proposal, which will be judged with an emphasis on innovation and the ability to bring new insight and approaches to immunology and vaccine-based research. Short-listed candidates will be invited to submit supplemental information to support the selection committee's final decision-making.

Eligibility Information

Applicants must be 35 or younger on June 22, 2025 (i.e., born June 23, 1989, or later). Early-career investigators, postdoctoral fellows, clinical fellows (including residents and interns), doctoral students and other researchers currently in training positions are eligible for these awards. International applicants are encouraged. Regardless of ethnicity, nationality or citizenship status, an eligible applicant must be employed by or affiliated with an eligible organization. Examples of eligible organizations include academia, biotechnology companies, foundations, government and non-governmental organizations, and research institutes. Individuals from organizations based outside of the US are eligible to apply.

While the Michelson Prizes are focused on research outcomes in the field of vaccine and immunotherapy discovery, applicants from the full spectrum of related disciplines, including clinical research, biochemistry, molecular biology, protein engineering, computer science, artificial intelligence/machine learning, biophysics, nanotechnology, microbiome, tropical medicine, environmental health etc., are encouraged to apply. Prior experience in human immunology and vaccinology is not required; however, the application must clearly articulate how the proposed research will impact and advance our understanding of human immunology and/or vaccine science.

Selection Process

The Michelson Prizes use an online application. All communications, including the invitation to submit supplemental information, will be made through email. We encourage applicants to add the Survey Monkey email address (noreply@mail.smapply.net) to their whitelist/contacts list so emails don't get stuck in spam.

How to Submit an Online Application

- Go to <https://michelsonprizes.smapply.org> (or click the 'apply now' button @ www.nextfrontieradvisors/michelson-prizes)
- Complete the 2025 Michelson Prizes application forms, upload a two-page research project description, and submit your completed application.
- Applications must contain all the information required in the form to be accepted.
- Applications must be submitted no later than June 22, 2025, 11:59 pm EDT (UTC -4)

Application Review

All applications will be reviewed by highly qualified scientists and clinicians with relevant expertise in the scientific subject areas. Applications will be evaluated based on innovation, impact, potential applications (including across disease areas and states), and achievability. Each application will be evaluated on its own merit, independent of other applications. Unfortunately, we are unable to provide any feedback to applicants regarding the specific review of their applications. However, we will communicate with all applicants once a decision has been reached.

MMRF acknowledges and supports the fundamental roles that equity, diversity, and inclusion have in scientific endeavors. We seek applicants from all backgrounds and strive to ensure a fair and equitable process for selecting Michelson Prize awardees. To avoid bias, we blind all information regarding applicants' names, gender, institution, ethnicity and citizenship during initial reviews.

Supplemental information

After the applications are reviewed, shortlisted candidates will be asked to submit supplemental information (note: this is by invitation only). We expect to communicate the status of all applicants in early September 2025. If you are selected to submit supplemental information (which will include an expanded 5-page research plan, budget, biosketch and letters of recommendation), you will receive an invitation email from Next Frontier Advisors. Instructions on how to submit will be provided with the invitation, and applicants will have approximately one month to compile information.

All applicants will be notified by email of any changes in the deadline dates.

Award Announcement

Applicants will be notified of their selection for a Michelson Prize: Next Generation Grant in December 2025. The award period commences on January 1, 2026, and ends on December 31, 2026.

Questions?

Please review our online Frequently Asked Questions first. For technical questions regarding the sm.apply platform, please use the 'help' function within the platform. For specific questions about eligibility or the application process, please email us at michelsonprizes@nextfrontieradvisors.com.

Research Conditions

The applicant must dedicate 50% of their full-time professional effort during the award period to the research funded by this award. The applicant is expected to assemble a research team that will provide the necessary expertise and collaborative efforts to accomplish the research goals proposed in the application.

The allocation of award funds for the conduct of the Michelson Prize-funded project is under the control of the awardee. It may be used flexibly for items such as salary, equipment, consumable supplies, travel to scientific meetings, and laboratory personnel working with the awardee. Specific limitations include the following: No more than 40% of the total award can be used for salaries without approval, travel costs cannot exceed \$1500, and there is a \$15,000 cap on equipment. MMRF does not pay indirect costs on the Michelson Prizes.

It is the responsibility of the awardee, in conjunction with their institution, to ensure that all academic and research activities funded by this award and carried out in or outside the US comply with the laws or regulations of the US and of the foreign country in which the academic and research activities are conducted.

Research Involving Human Anatomical Substances, Human Subjects, or Human Cadavers

Research involving new and ongoing research with human anatomical substances, human subjects, or human cadavers must be reviewed and approved by the applicant's local Human Research Protection Office (HRPO), Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Ethics Committee (EC). Local IRB/EC approval at the time of submission is not required.

Research Involving Animals

Research involving new and ongoing research with animals must be reviewed and approved by the applicant's local Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) of record. IACUC approval at the time of submission is not required.

If the applicant is selected for funding, specific documents related to the use of human subjects, human anatomical substances, human cadavers, and/or animals in the proposed research may be requested.

MMRF intends that information, data, and research resources generated under awards funded by these prizes be made available to the research community and the public at large promptly via standard means of scientific communication, including publications and presentations in scientific forums. MMRF will not retain any rights to published results or patents from research funded by these prizes.

MMRF recognizes that scientists in the early stages of their careers often switch institutions and will work with winners and their institutions to facilitate changes should that be necessary.

Award recipients must submit a final report and accounting of the use of funds at the conclusion of the award funding cycle. Any publications or works created by the award recipient must acknowledge support from the Michelson Prizes as follows: "Author X and this research was supported by the Michelson Prizes: Next Generation Grants." Copies of journal articles and other publications that result from this research prize should be sent to MMRF (a contact person will be provided).