

# Leon Levy Neuroscience Fellowship Program

Grant Guidelines as of October 22, 2012

## **Purpose:**

The Leon Levy Foundation continues to advance Leon Levy's interest in neuroscience by identifying and supporting the most exceptional individuals as they begin their research careers in studies of the mind, brain, and behavior. The Foundation has decided to pursue this core interest by establishing Leon Levy Neuroscience Fellowship Programs at select New York institutions. Our goal is to advance the careers of the most outstanding young neuroscientists and to encourage them to pursue risk taking research ideas that would not find support from other sources.

Our interest is in fundamental research to increase our understanding of the brain with particular emphasis on the relationship between brain function and its impact on human behavior. Although the LLF will not fund clinical trials, diseases of the brain, particularly those that affect behavior, are of interest to the foundation. All fellowship program affiliates will also benefit from participation in an annual symposium which is intended to foster connections and collaborations between researchers and across institutions.

Our hope is that these young scientists, along with their mentors, will raise the level of neuroscience research in New York and throughout the world.

## The overarching goals of the Leon Levy Neuroscience Fellowship program are:

- To support and nurture exceptional young researchers in the field.
- To support these researchers in their pursuit of innovative risk taking investigations.
- To support research that will make a meaningful contribution to our understanding in the basic and clinical neurosciences.
- To help the best young researchers advance their careers toward independent research.
- To promote synergies and collaborations among individuals across the grantee institutions.
- To use LLF grant funds as efficiently as possible.
- To create a fitting legacy to honor Leon Levy's interest in neuroscience.

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## **Grant Submission and Review:**

The Leon Levy Foundation does not accept unsolicited proposals. Grant proposals must be submitted by the institution at the invitation of the LLF. Individual applications will not be accepted. Institutions wishing to create or continue a Leon Levy Neuroscience Fellowship program should consider all the requirements and recommendations outlined in these guidelines bearing in mind that we seek to support individual researchers with extraordinary ability.

The LLF wishes to establish its fellowship program at select research institutions. Consequently, invited institutions may propose multi-fellow/multi-year programs for 2 to 5 year funding periods. The institution will be responsible for the overall grant submission including meeting all proposal and reporting requirements. Grant applications may include stipends that provide up to 75% of their salary support up to a maximum of \$100,000 per fellow per year inclusive of all allowable costs.

## **Institutional Requirements:**

Each institutional application must have a single Principal Investigator that will have overall responsibility for the fellowship program during the period of the grant. The PI will be responsible for fulfilling all grant requirements including the reporting requirements for the institution and the individual fellows. A description of the PI and their role in managing the fellowship program should be part of the grant application.

Grant applications must also include a complete consolidated budget stating clearly the uses of requested funds by year with specific line items for all major expenses starting with salary support of the fellows. Annual reports should show actual expenditures and explain any significant variances from original budget categories and balances.

One of the primary responsibilities of the institution is to select the best young researchers with the most innovative risk-taking research project ideas to become Leon Levy Neuroscience Fellows. The LLF recognizes that many institutions have an existing internal review process for this kind of selection and that others may need to develop such a process. In either case the internal review process should be described as part of the grant application. The LLF has outlined below some of the elements that should be included as part of a prospective fellow's Application and Project Description for the institutional review process.

Individuals may be awarded a Leon Levy Neuroscience Fellowship for one or two years at the discretion of the institution. In some situations the institution may feel there is a compelling reason to extend a fellowship for a third year. This will be allowed as long as it fits within the overall grant budget for that year. The LLF expects that no more than one third of fellowships will merit or require extension to a third year.

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The LLF recognizes the important role of mentorship in developing young researchers. The institution should describe its mentorship program, specifically as it relates to these fellowships in their application. Ideally the institution will ensure a mentoring program with senior faculty who maintain active and close involvement with the Levy Fellows.

The LLF seeks to provide support for the fellows themselves and their direct research expenses. No more than 15% of grant funds should be allocated to costs associated with mentoring or program administration.

The LLF wants to provide a protected environment that will enable young researchers to focus on their research projects. At least 80% of each fellow's time should be "protected" for research.

## **Individual Fellow Requirements:**

The purpose of the fellowships is to support the best individuals at critical early stages in their research careers. Individuals must be post-doctoral either MD, PhD or MD/PhD. Individuals should be in their second through their fifth year after beginning their post doctoral research period or in the first years immediately following the completion of their residency. Fellowships for individuals after these periods will not be encouraged. Individuals that are fully supported through their own R01 grant, HHMI fellowship or similar will not be accepted.

Each individual will be responsible for meeting the application guidelines of their own institution's competitive selection process for the Leon Levy Neuroscience Fellowship. This should include most if not all of the elements outlined below in the Individual Fellowship Application and Project Description.

The LLF seeks to increase the collaboration among individual research scientists in the field and among their home institutions in the New York metro area. To encourage this collaboration the fellows agree to attend the annual Leon Levy Neuroscience Symposium in each year of their grant funding. In addition, we hope that other in person and on-line opportunities will develop for communication and collaboration among fellows. We encourage fellows to participate in these opportunities as they develop.

One of the overarching goals of the Leon Levy Foundation is to create a legacy of philanthropy in Leon Levy's name. Although the LLF recognizes that titles are particular to each institution, inasmuch as it is possible, each fellow should use the title Leon Levy Neuroscience Fellow for the duration of the grant period. This title should be used in all reports and presentations by the fellow and in institutional communications regarding the fellow in print and on-line.

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## **Individual Fellowship Application and Project Description:**

Each nominated fellow will have successfully competed in an internal selection process particular to their own host institution. The relevant materials from that selection process should be provided to the LLF at the time that the awards are announced. This shall constitute an interim report.

Although there are no absolute requirements, the LLF understands that some or most of the following will likely be part of successful submissions:

- A clearly stated hypothesis.
- The aims of the proposed research project. How the project will enable the brain function, disease or disorder to be better understood, diagnosed, or treated?
- What makes this research innovative and risk taking.
- The scientific and/or clinical significance of the research.
- The scientific plan. What specific studies are proposed?
- The qualifications of the prospective fellow for undertaking the proposed research.
- Candidate's Curriculum Vitae (not to exceed 2 pages).
- Information on the candidate's current and pending funding.
- Name and title of the mentor who will supervise the fellow and guide the research with a brief description of their position in the institution and their research areas of interest.
- Environment and resources at the applicant institution that would support the proposed research?
- Two letters of recommendation: One letter must be from a thesis advisor, collaborator, or another scientist, who is familiar with the candidate's work. A second letter should be from the designated mentor.

## **Annual Leon Levy Neuroscience Symposium:**

In order to increase individual and institutional collaboration the LLF expects that each Leon Levy Neuroscience Fellow participate in the annual symposium. The symposium will typically be a daylong event hosted by one of the grantee institutions. The symposium will be held in April or May and will be scheduled to avoid potential conflicts with government grant deadlines and competing conferences. Presentations will include at least one representative fellow from each participating institution with an introduction by their PI or mentor. A distinguished leader in the will field will make a Key-note speech. A poster session for all fellows to present their research may also be included. Mentors of current fellows, lab associates and prior recipients of Leon Levy Neuroscience Fellowships will also be invited to attend.

Although Leon Levy Neuroscience Fellows will be engaged in a wide variety of research across the neurosciences, it is hoped that presentations, informal interactions, and discussions among

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the fellows will be productive for the participating individuals, their institutions, and the advancement of neuroscience research.

## **Grant Proposal Evaluation:**

New grant proposals will be considered by the LLF as they are received. The completeness of the application, its consistency with these guidelines, individual and institutional reputations and many other factors will be considered by the LLF in determining the merit of a grant proposal. The LLF may award all, part, or none of any grant application it has solicited. Consideration of grant proposals for renewed funding will be heavily dependent on the LLF's evaluation of any prior grant.

Ongoing and final evaluation of each grant will be conducted by the LLF in conjunction with an external panel of scientists. This evaluation will rely heavily on the reports submitted to the LLF in accordance with the reporting requirements described below.

The LLF will also conduct site visits of all grantees at least annually.

Throughout the evaluation process the LLF, along with its panel of scientific advisors, will continue to focus on the overarching goals of the Leon Levy Neuroscience Fellowship program:

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- To support research that will make a meaningful contribution to our understanding in the basic and clinical neurosciences.
- To help the best young researchers advance their careers toward independent research.
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## **Reporting:**

The Leon Levy Foundation is eager to learn about each Leon Levy Neuroscience Fellowship Program as it develops. Our program in this area is relatively new, and communication during this early stage between grantee institutions and the foundation is essential to facilitate the success of the program.

## Selection of Fellows and Interim Report:

As noted, it is up to each institution to establish an internal selection process to identify the exceptional young researchers that will be awarded a Leon Levy Neuroscience Fellowship. As these selection “rounds” will likely not be concurrent with annual or final reporting of the program’s progress at the institution we ask that the Individual Fellowship Application and Project Description used in the selection process be shared with the Foundation after the awards are made.

## Annual Reports:

Each year the foundation requires an annual report from the grantee institution. Subsequent pledge payments will not be released until a complete and satisfactory annual report has been received. Annual reports may be in any format but must include the following components:

- Summary of the program from the PI stating significant accomplishments and challenges of the prior year including any changes being made to the program.
- Submission of applications and project descriptions of selected Fellows to the LLF if they have not previously been provided.
- One or two page summary from each Leon Levy Neuroscience Fellow stating the progress on the project and describing any changes in direction or strategy. Any on-line or printed publications, or presentations made by the Fellow should be listed.
- One page summary from each Fellow’s mentor about the status of the project and the performance of the Fellow.
- A financial report showing actual expenses against the original budget categories. Any significant variances or carry forward balances should be explained.
- Copies of any major reports or papers of the Leon Levy Neuroscience Fellows demonstrating appropriate recognition.

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## Final Report:

Final reports should follow the same format and general contents of the Annual Report. The individual reports from each Fellow and mentor should clearly compare achievements during the fellowship period to the original objectives as laid out in the project description. Reports should indicate what was learned from each project and what contribution each project made to the field of neuroscience.

The Foundation is also interested to learn how Fellows contribute to the field of neuroscience after their fellowship period ends. Institutions that have ongoing Leon Levy Neuroscience Programs should also provide a report that tracks the placement of Fellows after their fellowship ends. If possible the LLF hopes to track the progress of the careers and the publications of Leon Levy Neuroscience Fellows well after their successful fellowships.

Periodically, and only after the Leon Levy Neuroscience Program is well established, the LLF may engage an outside body of experts to conduct a retrospective review. The LLF looks forward to the support of grantee institutions in those reviews when they are conducted.