



Date: November 24, 2020

To: Associate Deans of Research

From: Aaron Shonk, Senior Director, Foundation Relations
Oregon State University Foundation

Funding Opportunity: Keck Foundation – Call for concept papers

Deadline: December 21, 2020 (1:00 pm)

Introduction

This memorandum outlines the university's processes for its biannual submission to the W.M. Keck Foundation for its two research funding opportunities: (1) the science/engineering program and (2) the medical research program. This memo also details the first step in the overall application process—a call for concept papers for internal review.

After the internal review of timely concept papers, the Research Office and the OSU Foundation will forward *up to four* concept papers for science/engineering *and up to four* concept papers for medical research to the Keck Foundation for consideration. One successful concept paper in each category will be advanced to apply for a Phase I proposal.

An FAQ and a flowchart are provided at the end of this memo to help prospective applicants decide whether a Keck Foundation submission is appropriate at this time or in the future. Further information can be found at <http://www.wmkeck.org/grant-programs/research>.

Proposed projects should have the potential to meet the funding interests of the Keck Foundation. Please forward this call for concept papers to department chairs and appropriate faculty who may be interested.

Schedule and Overall Process

The overall time period for a funded Keck Foundation proposal can run from twelve to fifteen months. PIs interested in submitting a concept paper for consideration should carefully review the timeline for this funding cycle to see if they can reasonably meet all the deadlines in this process. Anyone wishing to be considered for this funding cycle must be available to meet the deadlines below.

A concept paper submitted and accepted for this funding cycle would result in the following approximate deadlines during the 2020 and 2021 calendar years:

December 21, 2020 (by 1:00 pm)	Deadline for concept papers submitted
By December 31	Research Office reviews concept papers and selects 1- 4 concepts for pre-application advice from the Keck Foundation in each research area.
Jan. 1 – Feb. 15	The Research Office has a pre-application advice session with the Keck Foundation. Up to one proposal for science/engineering and up to one proposal for medical research are selected for the Phase I application.
February 15 – 28	The Research Office notifies PIs of feedback and whether the PI can submit a Phase I application to the Keck Foundation.
May 1	Phase I deadline. PIs are strongly encouraged to work with the OSU Foundation in developing their Phase I applications.
July 15, 2021	Keck Foundation notifies PI if an invitation is extended for a Phase II proposal.
August 15	Phase II deadline
August/September	Keck Foundation program officers conduct in-person or virtual visit with PIs. (Only successful Phase I projects have visits scheduled.)
November or December	Keck Board meeting for review and funding decision

Please note that OSU plans to run two annual funding cycles for submissions to the Keck Foundation. A concept paper could be considered for future funding cycles if the timeline for this funding cycle does not work for a PI's schedule.

Late submissions for concept papers, Phase I proposals, and Phase II proposals will not be accepted.

Criteria

The Keck Foundation funds promising projects likely to lead to new models and/or breakthroughs in fundamental science, engineering, and medical science. (The Keck Foundation is not interested in applied science.) The Keck Foundation offers two distinct research grant opportunities to conduct this research, one in science/engineering and one in medical research.

A successful Keck Foundation proposal in either category could lead to the creation of a new field of research, development of new instrumentation that facilitates observations *and the science* of the previously unobservable, or discovery of knowledge that challenges prevailing perspectives and paradigms.

Proposals should provide new and *transformative* answers or approaches to underlying *questions* in *fundamental science* and should address issues that seem unsolvable, unattainable, or intractable. Keck Foundation proposals are *high-risk*¹ projects that push the edge of the field(s) and present unconventional approaches to intransient problems. The Keck Foundation does not fund projects that represent the “next logical step” in research. Successful grants hold promise of a significant breakthrough or new discovery in science, engineering, or medical research.

The Keck Foundation looks to fund projects that would or do not qualify for federal funding from agencies like NSF and NIH due to the proposed project’s *high-risk* nature. Projects that have received federal funding or that have applications pending for federal funding are not strong candidates for funding for the Keck Foundation and will be screened out at the early stages of this process. The Keck Foundation frequently funds projects that have been rejected by NSF or NIH because said projects were deemed too risky to succeed.

The Keck Foundation also looks for project personnel accomplished in terms of publications and journal citations and highly regarded in their area of research. The Foundation is open to funding faculty and faculty teams at junior and senior levels.

For additional information, please see the FAQ and flowchart at the end of this memo. Additional information may be found at the Keck Foundation’s website at <http://www.wmkeck.org/grant-programs/research/eligibility-and-priorities>.

¹ For the Keck Foundation, *high-risk* does not indicate a level of danger, but a level of uncertainty in terms of a project’s success (e.g., “the work may be less likely to lead to the proposed result.”)

Additional Information and Considerations

The bullets below provide additional important information on potential Keck Foundation proposals.

- **Oregon State University is eligible for a maximum funding amount of \$1 million per project; project duration may be for a period of up to three years.** Concept papers with budgets exceeding \$1 million will not be advanced to the Keck Foundation for consideration.
- **Institutional Match.** The Keck Foundation looks for strong evidence of institutional support for a proposed research project. There is no prescribed amount for institutional match; however, PIs should demonstrate that the university and PIs are leveraging resources to help undertake the project.
- **Previous Attempts at External Support.** The Keck Foundation favors projects where PIs have already sought—and failed to receive—funding from external funding agencies or sources, usually federal agencies. These attempts should be described briefly in the Justification section of the concept paper. (See below.)
- **Unallowable Expenses.** There are two important budgetary items that the Keck Foundation does not fund: (1) tuition support for graduate students and (2) indirect costs. Both items count toward institutional match when included in a proposal.
- **Equipment and Instrumentation.** The Keck Foundation accepts and frequently encourages expenses for equipment and instrumentation *only when* they are critical in advancing the proposed research projects. General use equipment should not be included in a budget for a Keck Foundation proposal.

The Keck Foundation asks that the PI of a proposal disclose if s/he is considering leaving the institution.

Submissions

The submission of a concept paper package involves *two separate files*, as follows:

1. A concept paper that describes the project (one-page max as a Word document or PDF).
2. Confirmation from the unit's leader or units' leaders (e.g., dean[s], school head[s], director[s], etc.) that the proposed research is a strategic priority. This confirmation entails financial commitment from the unit or from different units involved. See below for more information. (File format does not matter. For example, it can be a forwarded e-mail submitted with the rest of the packet. No more than one page or file *per unit leader*.)

Both files should be submitted together in one e-mail. Interested faculty should email their concept paper package to research.development@oregonstate.edu by the deadline above.

Any questions about concept papers should be directed to Aaron Shonk, Senior Director of Foundation Relations, at 541-231-8749 (cell) or aaron.shonk@osufoundation.org (preferred).

1. Concept Paper.

Concept papers are limited to **one page using 12 point font with 1" margins**. Concept papers must include the following:

- *Title.* State the (1) institution name and (2) proposal area along with (3) the title at the top of the page (e.g., Oregon State University: Medical Research—An examination of ...). It is recommended that this be done with one or, at most, two lines.
- *Overview* of the proposed project, emphasizing unique aspects, pilot studies, and how this research project differs (significantly) from current work in the field(s). Repeat whether the project is for science/engineering or for medical research.
- *Description of methodologies.* The Keck Foundation emphasizes the need for clear goals and methodologies. Clearly articulated methodologies fare better in the internal review process and with the Keck Foundation. A significant portion of the one-page description should be devoted to methodologies.
- *Key Personnel.* It is recommended that the concept paper include only one sentence for each key person on the project. The sentence should highlight what that individual brings to the project for which Keck Foundation funding is sought.
- *Brief justification for Keck support,* including information on entities (e.g., federal agencies) that either have turned down or discouraged the project (or highly similar projects) due to its high-risk nature. This section should be relatively short (e.g., 2-4 sentences).
- *Estimated budget broken down by major areas of expenditures* such as personnel,

equipment, consumable supplies, etc. (These costs can be rough approximations at this stage.) This section should be a relatively short section.

- If there's room, PIs are free to add other details (e.g., background to put the research into perspective, description of the institution's prominence in the field, etc.).
- If a reference is necessary, abbreviate it as (Science, 323, 45, '11). DO NOT USE (Jones et al., 2011).

Do not include illustrations in the concept paper. For general guidance, consider the ways in which the project aligns with the Keck Foundation's program priorities, which can be found at <http://www.wmkeck.org/grant-programs/research/eligibility-and-priorities>. Also see "Criteria" above to gain a sense of what Keck seeks.

Word and PDF formats only.

2. Confirmation of Strategic Priority. Interested faculty must have their college or unit's administrative leader confirm that the proposed research is a strategic priority. More than one unit (e.g., the College of Science and the College of Engineering) can support a single project. By confirming the proposed research as a strategic priority, the administrative leader(s) agrees to the following:

- Foregoing regular indirect costs (and incorporating them as cost-match in the proposal), and
- Covering graduate student tuition associated with the proposal (which can also be counted toward the cost-match)

These financial commitments may be shared between or among college units.

Scanned letters or attached e-mails (in the submission e-mail) are sufficient. The confirmation must be one page or less per unit leader and sent with the rest of the proposal.

KECK FAQ

<http://www.wmkeck.org/grant-programs/research>

The Keck Foundation seeks to support the following:

- Outstanding basic research that will have a significant impact in solving complex issues and problems.
- The foundation strives to fund research that is distinctive, novel, and even unique.
- Proposals should provide new and transformative perspective answers or approaches to underlying *burning basic research questions* in *fundamental science* and address issues that seem to be unsolvable, unattainable, or intractable.
- New discoveries in fundamental science could lead to new models, breakthroughs, or applications, potentially over a broad range of considerations.

By transformative,

- The Keck Foundation seeks to challenge existing paradigms.
- A successful Keck proposal could lead to the creation of a new field of research, development of new instrumentation enabling observations not previously possible, or discovery of knowledge that challenges prevailing perspectives.
- Keck proposals are *high-risk* projects that push the edge of the field(s), present unconventional approaches to intransigent problems, and/or challenge the prevailing paradigm.
- The Keck Foundation looks for projects that would not qualify for federal funding from agencies like NSF and NIH due to the project's *high-risk* nature.
- Projects that have received federal funding or that have applications pending for federal funding are not likely to be funded and may be screened out at the internal review of concept papers.
- The Keck Foundation looks for outstanding project personnel who are accomplished in terms of publications and journal citations and highly regarded in their area of research.
- Keck is open to funding faculty at either the junior or senior level.
- The maximum amount of funding OSU can seek on any research proposal is \$1 million for a project up to three years.

KECK DOES NOT FUND:

- Drug development and delivery/biomarker identification
- Clinical research / therapies
- Extension of current work/next logical step — even if significant
- Projects that are too narrow/too specific
- User facilities
- Application, efficiency/optimization, or cost cannot be the main drivers for the proposal.
- No supplements or renewals

RECENTLY FUNDED TOPICS

Visit <http://www.wmkeck.org/grant-abstracts-final/research> for abstracts of awards.

DECISION-MAKING FLOWCHART FOR KECK FOUNDATION PROPOSALS

