Kavli Neuroscience Discovery Institute
Distinguished Postdoctoral Fellows Program 2026-28

Submission deadline April 15, 2026

Objective

The Kavli NDI Distinguished Postdoctoral Fellowship enables postdoctoral fellows at Johns Hopkins University to pursue cross-disciplinary research, aligned with the mission of the Kavli Neuroscience Discovery Institute (Kavli NDI), in neuroscience, engineering, and data science.

Award Information

We invite proposals for funding of up to $67,000 per year for two years. Awardees will also receive a one-time $10,000 project supplement and up to $1,500 in academic travel support per year for project-relevant activities throughout the fellowship. Year 2 support is contingent on satisfactory progress, documented in a progress report due two months before the second year begins.

Eligibility

- Applicants must hold a Ph.D. or equivalent degree.
- Full-time JHU postdoctoral fellows (who must be appointed as a JHU postdoctoral fellow prior to award commencement).
- Fellows must be co-mentored by full-time JHU faculty (Assistant Professor level or above).
- At least one mentor must be a Kavli NDI member.
- Preference will be given to projects that collectively bridge neuroscience with engineering and/or data science.
- The award may not be held concurrently with any fellowship that provides salary/stipend and benefits.
- Investigators may serve as PI/co-PI on multiple applications but are limited to serving as mentor for one awardee per category (Doctoral and Postdoctoral).
- Prior awardees are ineligible; however, PIs of prior awardees may apply again as PI/co-PI.

Key Dates

March 15: Application portal opens
April 15: Applications due by 11:59 PM ET
Mid-May to mid-June: Decision notifications
July 1: Expected award start date

Proposal Preparation and Submission

Formatting Requirements

Format all materials for 8.5" x 11" pages with 1" margins, single spacing, and 12-point Arial or Helvetica. Follow the page limits specified for each section.

Submit applications via https://jhu.infoready4.com/#competitionDetail/2008960

Deadline: April 15, 2026, 11:59 PM ET.

Proposal Materials

Proposals should include the following items:

1. **Applicant's Biosketch**, not to exceed five (5) pages, in accordance with NIH or NSF guidelines (for formatting assistance see http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sciencv/).
2. **PI and Co-PI** should include:
   - **Each PI's Biosketch**, not to exceed five (5) pages, in accordance with NIH guidelines (for formatting assistance see http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sciencv/).
   - A brief, one-page statement summarizing each **mentor's qualifications** and **expertise,** their contributions to the project, and how these skills will be integrated to provide co-mentorship of the applicant for the duration of the fellowship.
   - Provide a 1-page **mentorship plan** explaining how the fellow, PI, and co-PI will integrate their research into a cohesive, cross-disciplinary team from project start through the two-year fellowship. Specify concrete steps to create new synergies (such as the fellow's participation in lab meetings), and the planned meeting frequency with each PI.
   - A list of each PI's **existing funding** for research related to the project, following the NIH format for description of "Other Support".
3. **Project Title:** Title reflecting the central concepts of the project, not exceeding 30 words.
4. **Lay Abstract**: Provide a lay summary (300 words max) that is conceptually accessible to non-experts and highlights the proposed research's potential impact.
5. **Project Description** (5 pages maximum, including figures, not including references): This document must contain the following sections:
   - **Background and Specific Aims**: Briefly describe the project background, objectives, and the hypotheses or questions to be addressed, and conclude with a

numbered list of Aims.

- **Approach**: Provide a clear description of the research design, measures, data analysis plan, and any preliminary data.
- **Significance:** Briefly describe how the project addresses each evaluation criterion. Articulate its significance by identifying the critical barrier to progress in brain research (or otherwise explaining its importance) and explain how achieving the aims will advance scientific knowledge, technical capabilities, and/or practice.

6. **Project Timeline for Years 1 and 2**: Include a brief project timeline that identifies major activities and their projected completion dates (e.g., experimental development, data analysis, manuscript submission).
7. Note that the Kavli NDI award must be used exclusively to support the salary of the awarded Postdoctoral Fellow.
8. **Letters of Reference (2):** Two letters of reference must be submitted directly by referees through the application portal and should address the fellow's suitability to undertake these studies. Letters must be from individuals other than the proposed mentors.

Application Review Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated by an internal review panel; priority will go to those that most strongly meet the following explicitly assessed criteria:

- **Innovation:** Pursues transformative neuroscience via novel strategies, innovative tools, and efficient data management/analysis to advance understanding of nervous system structure and function.
- **Interdisciplinary**: Employs multiple theoretical and empirical approaches and clearly spans disciplines, departments, and/or divisions.
- **Sustainability**: Likely to generate preliminary data and a clear path to follow-on support (federal, foundation, industry) beyond the award period.
- **Approach:** Design, methods, and analysis are rigorous, integrated, and aligned with the Aims and research environment, with anticipated pitfalls and alternatives addressed.
- **Team Strength (PI, Co-PI, Research Team):** PIs have strong track records; the team is uniquely qualified to create cross-field synergies and has the expertise to execute all project elements.
- **Team Cohesion (PI, Co-PI, Fellow):** A clear plan for high research integration and sustained cohesion from award start through project completion.
- **Community** (PI, Co-PI): Demonstrated involvement in Kavli NDI activities and contribution to Kavli NDI goals.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Can my PI and co-PI be in the same department/school?**
   Yes. Interdisciplinarity is defined by distinct expertise, not affiliation. PIs/co-PIs may be in the same department or school if their expertise is distinct; outline this distinction in the application.

2. **Do I need preliminary data?**
   We encourage collaborative, high-risk ideas. Include enough preliminary data to demonstrate feasibility and support a viable co-mentoring plan.

3. **I already have an NSF/NIH/other fellowship. Can I still apply?**
   No. The award cannot be held concurrently with another fellowship that supports salary (or stipend).

4. **I'm currently supported by a fellowship. If chosen, can I start my Kavli fellowship after the current fellowship ends?**
   No. The Kavli fellowship cannot overlap with any fellowship that provides salary/stipend support.

5. **What happens if I am awarded another fellowship during my Kavli Award period?**
   If you decide to accept the award, you must forfeit the Kavli fellowship and return pro-rated funds to the Institute.

6. **I have received an award in the past. Can I apply again?**
   No. Past awardees cannot be considered in the same category. Prior graduate fellows may apply for the postdoctoral fellowship. PIs of past awardees may apply again as PI/co-PI.

7. **Is there a limit on the number of applications per lab?**
   No. A lab/PI may submit multiple applications but can receive at most one fellowship per category (Doctoral and Postdoctoral).

Please direct any additional questions to Sarada Viswanathan, Scientific Director, Kavli NDI: sviswa10@jhmi.edu.