

THE SONTAG FOUNDATION

Since 2003, the Sontag Foundation has invested over \$65 million dollars to support the scientific careers of young investigators pursuing high-risk projects at a critical stage in their research. Interested applicants should carefully read the following information about the award and application process before applying.

For answers to specific questions, please see the Frequently Asked Questions below.

Key Application Dates:

- The application portal opens on January 12, 2026.
- The application deadline is March 18, 2026. The portal will close at 11:59pm ET.
- Funding awards will be announced in the Fall 2026.

Funding

- This award is \$750,000; \$150,000 per year for a five-year period (*In 2023 the total funding award increased to \$750,000 over a five-year period from \$600,000 over a four-year period).
- Grant agreements will be issued in October/November of the award year.
- The funding period for 2026 grants will begin on or about October 14, 2026 and end on September 30, 2031.
- Not more than \$19,500 may be allocated annually for facilities and administration (F & A) charges or indirect costs. This amount is included in the annual payout of \$150,000.
- Disbursements are made on a quarterly basis to the sponsoring institution for use by the award winner and are subject to annual review of his or her progress report.
- During the grant term, grantees are required to attend an annual scientific retreat held in February (all eligible expenses for grantee's travel, lodging, and meals are covered by the Foundation).

Eligibility Requirements

- Applicants must hold a doctoral degree in a discipline with applicability to brain cancer research.
- Applicants must have received their first independent faculty appointment no earlier than March 1, 2021 and no later than January 1, 2026 at a tax-exempt academic, research, or medical institution within the United States or an equivalent institution in Canada.
- If the institution grants tenure, the qualifying appointment must be on the tenure track.
- Applicant's career track and proposed research should demonstrate outstanding promise as contributors to science relevant to brain cancer research (basic science & related fields encouraged to apply).
- More than one individual from the institution may apply for this award.
- As a re-applicant, you should submit a new research proposal or clearly outline substantive scientific revisions to the Aims from the previous project. To document these changes, you will need to:
 - Explain the changes in the Project Summary portion on the application AND In the Aims section of the Research Proposal.
 - Summarize substantial additions, deletions, and changes to the research project; and identify individual changes by using brackets, indents, or change of typography.
- This grant does not support clinical trials research.

- **All documents including letters of recommendation and officer approval must be submitted by the application deadline.**

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Q: How do I submit an application?

A: Applications are submitted through the online grant portal. All documents including letters of recommendation and officer approval must be received and uploaded by the deadline to be considered eligible.

2. Q: If I applied in a previous year but was not funded, can I apply again?

A: Yes. Re-applications will be accepted from candidates who applied previously. However, the proposed research project must be different than the original project submitted.

3. Q: The research I propose in this application is my first brain tumor project. May I apply without a background in neuro-oncology research?

A: Yes. There is great value in bringing other perspectives to bear on the complex questions relating to brain cancer. View the DSA recipients on the website to see the diverse backgrounds and projects of our previous award winners. You will be required to have a mentor with brain cancer experience. **A letter of support from your mentor is required.** Your mentor letter of support should specifically include information describing your mentor's experience in brain cancer research, you and your mentor's relationship, including but not limited to length of relationship, description of role, whether mentor will serve as a collaborator on this project, and mentor's commitment to your career.

4. Q: Does the proposed research project have to show potential to generate new knowledge relating to causes, cure, or treatments for primary brain tumors?

A: Yes. The proposed research project should demonstrate the relevance to primary brain tumors. The Foundation does not fund projects focused on metastatic brain cancer.

5. Q: For the research proposal, are figures and references included in the five-page limit?

A: Yes. The proposal is limited to five pages including any figures. References are not included in the five-page limit.

6. Q: What is the format for the research proposal?

A: The uploaded document should be formatted with the following dimensions:

- Font size should be 11 points or larger.
- The type density should be no more than 15 characters per linear inch and the line spacing must be no more than six lines per vertical inch.
- We recommend the following fonts: Arial, Georgia, or Helvetica.
- Legibility is key for review of your proposal. Applications that do not adhere to the requirement listed above may be withdrawn from consideration.

7. Q: Do I have to be a citizen of the United States to apply for this award?

A: No. There is no citizenship requirement. However, applicants must hold a faculty position at a non-profit academic or research institution in the United States or Canada.

8. Q: My faculty appointment will become effective soon after the application deadline. May I still apply?

A: No. If your first faculty appointment was not effective on or before January 1 of the application year, you are considered ineligible, and your application will not be considered.

9. Q: What should I include in the “Personal Statement?”

A: **Tell us about yourself** - the Distinguished Scientist Award is best characterized as a career development award. For this reason, the Sontag Foundation is very interested in learning more about you, the applicant. Your statement should share insights beyond information which can be gleaned from your bio sketch and research proposal.

Let us know:

1. What is your life story?
2. What caused you to make the career decisions you did?
3. Why did you make the educational choices you did?
4. What people influenced you along the way? Why?
5. What other facts about you and your motivation should we know?

Max word count of 1000

10. Q: What should be included in the “Project Summary?”

A: The project summary should provide a layperson summary of the project. Describe the work in a way that it will be understood by people who do not have scientific or medical backgrounds. Be clear and avoid technical and scientific terms when possible. Your summary should specifically explain (1) the importance of the problem or the critical barrier to progress in the brain cancer field your proposed project addresses; (2) explain how your proposed project seeks to shift current research paradigms; and (3) identify the potential significance of the project from the patient perspective or how will successful completion of the project lay foundation for future research studies?

Max word count of 300.

11. Q: How important are the reference letters and who should we ask to provide a letter?

A: Letters of reference are a key component of your application. Each letter is read thoroughly by every member of the review committee. We are looking for varied insights into you as an individual and your accomplishments at each stage of your career. A reference letter should be solicited from: 1. Department Chair/Program Leader/Center Director, 2. Advisor during Postdoc/Mentor during training, and 3. Professional reference (can be provided by a collaborator, colleague, or mentor) who you feel would be able to share additional insights that would strengthen your application for this grant.

12. Q: How are indirect costs calculated on the proposed budget?

A: Indirect costs are calculated as a maximum of \$19,500 per year. This amount is included in the maximum annual payout of \$150,000 (\$750,000 total grant award).

13. Q: Is this a peer-reviewed award?

A: Yes. The selection process incorporates a review by a Scientific Advisory Board appointed by The Sontag Foundation. In addition to the scientific review, applications undergo a review by the Foundation lay committee. This committee looks closely at the individual applicant as opposed to the scientific merits of the proposed research. Input from both committees is factored into final funding decisions.

14. Q: How many Distinguished Scientist Awards are granted each year?

A: The Foundation does not have a limit to the number of awards that are granted. Since 2003, the number of applicants funded each year has ranged from two to six.

15. Q: May I change institutions during the course of this award?

A: Yes. The Distinguished Scientist Award may follow an awardee to another institution, but The Sontag Foundation retains sole discretion to determine portability of the Award. Considerations include, in part, the grantee's plans to continue the funded research project at another institution designated as tax exempt by the IRS and that institution's willingness to agree to the terms and conditions of the award.

Have a Question?

Contact Georgia Pinner, Program Officer at The Sontag Foundation.

Email: gpinner@sontagfoundation.org, Office Phone: 904-273-8755, 8:00am-5:00pm ET