Overview of the Program

JSMF is internationally recognized for supporting research on cognition and behavior; most recently, through the Understanding Human Cognition (UHC) Scholar Awards. JSMF suspended the Scholar Awards in 2019 and undertook an exploration of the new priorities for the foundation’s support for the fields of cognitive science, cognitive psychology and developmental science with the intent of identifying a funding initiative that would be forward looking and responsive to contemporary questions, while building on JSMF’s history. JSMF is announcing new grant guidelines for the Understanding Human Cognition program. The foundation believes the time is right to advance the understanding of human cognition and behavior via scientific approach that departs from what is traditionally pursued in academic cognitive psychology/cognitive neuroscience laboratories. Much of the current understanding of behavior is derived from experimental laboratory work that makes substantive conceptual and methodological assumptions during task selection and data acquisition. Cognitive psychology and cognitive neuroscience experiments are typically pursued in artificial environments with subjects drawn from narrowly defined populations performing tasks assumed to be valid proxies for real cognition and behavior.

As a result, these experiments may not reflect the naturally occurring, free-flowing behaviors humans engage in while carrying out meaningful actions in the context of their everyday lives. It is reasonable to ask how much has been missed or ignored because researchers’ experimental designs are based on pre-selected and specific aspects of cognition and behavior deemed to be of interest prior to the study. What more might be learned by challenging preconceived notions and common assumptions about cognition and behavior by advancing new theories and by using methods where it is possible to observe what behavior looks like in every day, real-world, dynamic contexts? With the Opportunity
Awards, JSMF is seeking to fund projects leading to new conceptual and empirical studies of cognition and behavior that

- embrace complexity,
- recognize the dynamic nature of action
- are situated in real work contexts
- cross levels of analysis, and
- unite traditionally separate domains of inquiry (e.g. vision and speech)

JSMF is encouraging researchers to pursue important questions using conceptual and methodological approaches that takes seriously the trajectories, biological and experiential, contributing to the ongoing development of cognition and behavior occurring across the lifespan. Individual projects need not cover the full human life span but the reasons for focusing on specific age ranges for study should be fully articulated. Research plans that only propose to document task performance of subjects at different ages (e.g. comparing 15-year-old subjects to 60-year-old subjects) are not responsive to the call for proposals.

Award Details

The new JSMF Opportunity Awards provide up to $250,000 in seed funds expendable over a flexible time period (between 2 and 4 years) as needed by researchers to design and carry out studies motivated by questioning, revisiting, or re-examining the current state of academic knowledge of human cognition and behavior using a dynamic, context-sensitive lens. New theories, tools and techniques have opened myriad opportunities for rigorously studying cognition and behavior as individuals engage in ongoing real-world activities in everyday life contexts in ways not previously possible. JSMF is particularly interested in supporting applications from researchers who may not now be using the approaches described in this call for proposals, but who want to adopt this approach as an experimentally coherent way of conceptualizing, designing, and pursuing an understanding of human cognition and behavior.
As a member of the Open Research Funders Group, JSMF supports and encourages the adoption of open science practices as stated in application guideline # 7 below.

Applications must be submitted by an eligible institution (501c3, government instrumentality, or foreign equivalent) on behalf of researchers with full-time faculty positions or equivalent.

Opportunity Awards can be used:

- to support collaboration or to obtain training that allows new theories and new tools to be incorporated into ongoing research.
- to provide a researcher with supported time while acquiring new skills and knowledge
- to pilot or test novel experimental approaches and to allow laboratories primarily using artificial laboratory constrained tasks to explore behavioral studies with more natural free flowing behaviors.
- to refine and extend the temporal dimension of data acquisition allowing for more dynamic assessments of how behavior unfolds over time.
- to diversify and expand study populations.

Opportunity awards will not provide additional support for already established research programs.

Deadline

The deadline for applications is April 14, 2020 15:59 CDT (20:59 UTC). All materials must be submitted electronically through the specified process. Applications submitted after the posted deadline are not accepted.
Decisions and Notification

Applications that meet the eligibility requirements will be reviewed by an expert advisory panel. The awards will be based on the importance and originality of the research, the quality of the essay, the expenditure plan, and the nominee’s overall qualifications.

Final funding decisions will be announced at the end of October after the JSMF Board of Directors meets and considers the advisory board’s recommendations.

JSMF can support up to 8 Opportunity Awards each year.

Application Guidelines

Applications must be submitted electronically via the JSMF website and are due no later than Tuesday, April 14, 2020 15:59 CDT (20:59 UTC).

Guidelines for Proposals for UHC Opportunity Awards

1. Cover Sheet (PDF or Word template)

2. A brief and accessible summary of the proposed research (maximum 500 words) suitable for posting on the JSMF website.

3. Proposal narrative (3000 words maximum excluding references and brief figure legends; proposals using extended figure legends as an attempt to circumvent the word count will be declined prior to review).
The proposal narrative should clearly characterize the question motivating the proposal. The narrative should describe the current state of knowledge and how conceptual or methodological assumptions or misconceptions have contributed to inadequate explanation of human behavior (meaning how humans solve the problems they encounter in their everyday lives) and what it is that the proposed research would do differently.

Proposal narratives must describe the methodologies to be used, including data acquisition and analysis, in enough detail for the program advisory panel to evaluate the likelihood that the study designs will provide interpretable and meaningful results. Due to word constraints, descriptive clarity about the design and methodological choices should take priority over the provision of ever finer-grained description of experimental materials.

4. A budget narrative (500 word maximum) describing why funds are required to carry out the proposed project and how the requested funds will be utilized in the context of other funded work the applicant is pursuing. 10% of funds must be reserved for the preparation of post-grant publications, and for other aspects of dissemination such as data, tool or code sharing.

5. A complete list of the applicant(s) current and pending support.

6. The biosketch of the primary applicant and a brief (less than 100 words) paragraph detailing the contribution of any other researcher or trainee supported by the award. Optional: Consider using Science Experts Network Curriculum Vitae (SciENcv) for the submitted biosketch.

7. Statement concerning data management and data sharing.

JSMF is committed to open science and best practices for transparency and reproducibility. Toward that end, JSMF requests all applicants to use video to document the procedure for data collection from subjects (including instructions to participants, putting equipment on participants, displays viewed by participants, etc.). A video record of at least one participant (or model) encompassing from the start to end of data collection should be made openly available on Databrary. For applicants who use video as a primary source of data, describe the
plans to request participant permission for sharing (see, for example, the Databrary template or document what an IRB or equivalent allows) and describe plans for depositing sharable videos in an appropriate repository such as Databrary. It is recommended that other data and materials should be shared through Open Science Framework, Github, or another appropriate repository.

Frequently Asked Questions

Last updated February 14, 2020

Do you fund internationally?
Yes. We have no geographic restrictions. International applications are encouraged.

Is my idea something you would fund?
We usually don't advise potential applicants on the appropriateness of their research ideas or programs. We prefer that you carefully read over the program description and then decide whether or not to apply.

When will I be able to submit an application?
It is anticipated that applications will be accepted online beginning March 10. JSMF is currently transitioning to a new application management system. The requested application content will not change; however, the method and submission process will be changing. Bookmark this webpage and/or sign up to receive notification when the information has been updated.

I have a question about font, margin, page requirements, references, image captions, etc.
There are no specific guidelines related to these types of questions. Use your best judgment, and
understand that the application fields and any uploaded file(s) submitted needs to be easily readable. References and image captions are not included in word counts.

I'm having a problem with an electronic application or a particular program guideline. Whom can I contact for help?
For the fastest response, send an email to info@jsmf.org.

Important Dates

February 10, 2020
*Opportunity Award announced and application guidelines posted on the website.*

March 10
*Anticipated date that applications can be submitted via the website*

April 14, 2020 15:59 CDT (20:59 UTC)
*Deadline to submit an application*

April - May
*Applications will be reviewed during this time*

June 2-3
*Advisory panel will meet to discuss the finalists*

Late October
*JSMF Board of Directors will consider the advisory panel's recommendations.*