Overview of the Program

JSMF is internationally known for supporting research on cognition and behavior, and currently does so through its Understanding Human Cognition (UHC) program. In 2020, JSMF announced priorities for the foundation’s support for the fields of cognitive science, cognitive psychology and developmental science with the intent of launching a funding initiative that would be forward looking and responsive to contemporary questions, while building on JSMF’s history. The Opportunity Awards were initiated because the foundation believes the time is right to advance the understanding of human cognition and behavior via a developmental science approach.

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 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

- recognize the dynamic nature of cognition and behavior,
- are situated in real world contexts,
- cross levels of analysis,
- unite traditionally separate domains of inquiry (e.g. vision and speech),
- embrace complexity, and
- consider how behavior is influenced by interactions among individuals.

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 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 new 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. This call for proposals is focused on applications from researchers who are not now 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.

**Opportunity awards will not provide additional support for already established research programs. Such proposals will be triaged out early in the review process.**

As a member of the [Open Research Funders Group](https://openresearchfunders.org), JSMF supports and encourages the adoption of open science practices as stated in application guideline #6 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.

Priority will be given to applicants requesting funds:

- to support collaboration or to obtain training that allows new theories and new tools to alter the conduct of ongoing research.
- to provide a researcher with supported time while acquiring the new skills and knowledge to alter future research design.
- 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.

**Requests for additional support for already established research studies or pre-existing programs will not be considered.**

In order to be eligible for funding, it is expected that projects would commence before the end of 2021.
Deadline

The deadline for applications is **April 9, 2021 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 all 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 proposal, 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 April 9, 2021 15:59 CDT (20:59 UTC).

Guidelines for Proposals for UHC Opportunity Awards

1. A brief and accessible summary of the proposed project (maximum 500 words) suitable for posting on the JSMF website.
2. 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 and how humans solve the challenges posed by everyday life, and what it is that the proposed research would do differently to advance knowledge and understanding.

Proposal narratives must describe the methodologies to be used, including data acquisition and analysis, in enough detail for the Opportunity Awards 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.

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

4. A complete list of the applicant(s) current and pending support and any studies that may be related to this work.
5. 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.

6. Statement concerning data management and data sharing.

JSMF is committed to open science and best practices for transparency and reproducibility. Validation and progress in research is dependent on access to scientific data. Sharing scientific data helps validate research results, enables researchers to combine data types to strengthen analyses, facilitates reuse of hard to generate data or data from limited sources, and accelerates ideas for future research inquiries. Central to sharing scientific data is the recognized need to make data as available as possible while ensuring that the privacy and autonomy of research participants are respected, and that confidential/proprietary data are appropriately protected.

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 shareable videos in an appropriate repository such as Databrary. It is recommended that other data and materials should be shared through an appropriate data repository.
Frequently Asked Questions

Last updated February 2, 2021

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, browse through past grants awarded in the program, and then decide whether or not to apply.

How do I submit an application?
Sign into your existing JSMF account or create an account and select Funding Opportunities to begin.

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.

What are the JSMF funding policies? Are indirect costs an allowable budget item?
JSMF Funding Policies can be found at this link: https://www.jsmf.org/apply/policies.htm. Indirect costs are not considered an allowable budget item.

Are researchers with existing JSMF grant funding eligible to apply?
Opportunity Awards will not provide additional support for already established research programs. Current UHC Scholars with active grants are able to participate in an opportunity grant (for example, for providing training in a new tool or technique) but aren't able to receive additional JSMF grants funds for their current work.

If a researcher submits an application for an Opportunity Award but does not receive funding is he or she eligible to apply again next year?
Yes, but any new application should be substantially different than the prior year application.

Important Dates

February 2, 2021
Updated guidelines for the 2021 Opportunity Award RFA posted on the website.

April 9, 2021 15:59 CDT (20:59 UTC)
Deadline to submit a complete application
April - June
Applications will be reviewed during this time

June 18
Advisory panel will meet to discuss the finalists

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

Before the end of 2021
In order to be eligible for funding, it is expected that projects would commence before the end of 2021.