



## GUIDELINES & INSTRUCTIONS for the GRASS FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION



The following instructions pertain to Form GFA, which is the application for the Grass Fellowship Program at the MBL. Note that the 2024 application period will begin earlier, with deadlines for Summer 2025 Fellowships due August 30.

### A. APPLICANT INFORMATION

Self-explanatory; please provide the requested information.

- **Regarding animals:** Additional details will be requested in Section F1c.
- **Regarding Citizenship:** Applicants who are not US citizens or resident aliens must hold a valid visa for the entire duration of the program (e.g. J-1, H-1B, F1, F1-Opt, E3 or TN). Information regarding visas is available on the [MBL website](#) or by contacting The Grass Fellowship Program at [immigration@mbledu](mailto:immigration@mbledu) or [gfp@grassfoundation.org](mailto:gfp@grassfoundation.org). If selected, applicants requiring a visa should immediately initiate the visa application process. *Based on past experience, applicants should not rely on visa advice provided by their current institution; please contact MBL for guidance.*

If you are holding an H-1B or F1 visa (or similar) funds will be transferred directly to your home institution which will administer the grant. In this case, your home institution will need to countersign a document stating its intent to do so. This form is available at [www.grassfoundation.org/grass-fellowship/fellowship-application-portal](http://www.grassfoundation.org/grass-fellowship/fellowship-application-portal).

- **Regarding Letters of Reference:** To be complete, each application must include a letter of recommendation from the applicant's current research advisor (if applicable) plus one additional letter from an investigator familiar with the applicant. These should be submitted on official institutional letterhead and may be mailed or sent electronically to The Grass Fellowship Program ([gfp@grassfoundation.org](mailto:gfp@grassfoundation.org); The Grass Fellowship Program, 7 MBL Street, Homestead, Woods Hole, MA 02543, USA; see Section I). Letters of recommendation must arrive on or before the application deadline or the application will not be considered. If an applicant proposes to work in the laboratory of an investigator at the MBL rather than in the Grass Lab (see Section E), an additional letter from the sponsoring investigator must also be submitted. Applicants are encouraged to provide their research proposal to those writing letters on their behalf. Applications are strengthened when the letters of recommendation discuss, in addition to the applicant's strengths and her/his previous research accomplishments, the significance and likelihood of success of the proposed fellowship project. If the applicant's proposed research is relevant to a laboratory that she/he will join after the fellowship (e.g., a Ph.D. student moving to a postdoctoral lab), a letter from the upcoming advisor may strengthen the application. Letters of recommendation may not be submitted by current Trustees of The Grass Foundation ([see list here](#)) or Grass Fellowship Program Directors or Associate Directors. The Trustees may, at their discretion, request a follow-up interview with any prospective Grass Fellow.

### B. CONTACT INFORMATION

Self-explanatory; please provide the requested information and let us know if you would consent to be interviewed by the Trustees.

## C. CURRICULUM VITAE

The CV may be prepared in any form but should be in Arial or a similarly common font, no smaller than 12 pt, with at least .5" margins, and include selected standard information such as education, positions, awards, funding and publications. List peer-reviewed publications, abstracts and review articles separately.

## D. RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The proposal should be in Arial or a similarly common font, no smaller than 12 pt, with at least .5" margins. It must be prepared by the applicant and include the following sections:

1. Title of research proposal.
  2. The research proposal (not to exceed 4 pages) including background and significance, specific aims, experimental plan, expected findings and references.
    - a. no more than 2 pages describing your professional and scientific background; how you arrived at this research project
    - b. no more than 2 pages describing your proposed study.
  3. A justification (limited to 1 page) of why performing the proposed research at MBL is essential for your research at this point in your career.
  4. A summary of research experience (limited to 1 page). Define clearly your current career status (e.g., Ph.D. or M.D. student, a postdoctoral trainee, or early faculty member) and level. If your current position is nearing completion, include a description of your upcoming plans and how the Fellowship relates to these plans. Applicants should not combine a Grass Fellowship with writing a Ph.D. thesis.
  5. The Kavli Foundation will support Grass fellows whose work investigates the impact of changing ecosystems such as climate change on neurobiological function. If you feel that your proposal is relevant to this issue, please provide a brief explanation (200 words max).
  6. Optional information (limited to 300 words). If there is any additional information or are special circumstances that you feel will help the Selection Committee assess your application, explain here. If you are interested in extending your time at MBL, please include that here.
- **Regarding the Research Proposal:** The Selection Committee consists of Foundation Trustees. All sections of the application should be written so that they can be understood and evaluated by neuroscientists who may not be specialists in your particular field. Applications will be judged on attributes including overall quality, the applicant's ability to organize and present pertinent information, ability to develop a strong experimental plan, the applicant's promise in the field of neuroscience, the feasibility of the project and likelihood of success. The project may build on an applicant's current research or be in a new research area. The Selection Committee gives preference to research proposals appropriate to the facilities and organisms that can be accommodated at the MBL. If unfamiliar with the MBL, visit their website: [www.mbl.edu](http://www.mbl.edu). See Section F regarding appropriate species. Questions regarding the suitability of research projects or species should be directed to [labbo@mbl.edu](mailto:labbo@mbl.edu) or [gfp@grassfoundation.org](mailto:gfp@grassfoundation.org). At the Annual Meeting of the Society for Neuroscience the Grass Foundation holds a social in collaboration with the MBL. Many trustees and former fellows are typically present at this social, and are happy to give further advice.

## E. DATES

- **Regarding Dates:** The tenure of the Program is 14 weeks and strong preference is given to applicants present for the entire period. The Program starts the Memorial Day Monday, and ends after 14 weeks, usually on the Saturday just prior to Labor Day. Please see the dates for the Grass Fellowship Program at: <https://grassfoundation.org/fellowship-timeline/>. These are the check-in and check-out dates for MBL housing. It is not possible to occupy housing before the program begins or stay after the program ends, except by prior approval to accommodate international travelers.
- **Regarding the Grass Laboratory:** Most Fellows work in The Grass Laboratory (located in the Rowe Laboratory building), which accommodates up to 10 investigators. Less commonly,

Fellows may arrange to work in the laboratory of another investigator at MBL; sponsoring investigators may be members of the year-round or summer research communities. The Grass Foundation pays for Fellows' research space in the Grass Lab whereas the sponsoring investigator provides space in their own laboratory.

- **Regarding Fellows working outside the Grass Lab:** If a request is made to work outside the Grass Laboratory, the sponsoring investigator must submit a letter of support by the application deadline, (this letter is in addition to the two required letters of recommendation) indicating the following:
  - agreement to host the proposed research project in the investigator's space,
  - dates the investigator will be in residence at MBL,
  - availability to mentor the project during the Fellowship period, and
  - availability of laboratory space and equipment during the Fellowship period.

## F. BUDGET

### 1. RESEARCH EXPENSES

**a. Laboratory Equipment.** List the major pieces of equipment needed to perform the proposed research, including the name of the manufacturer, model number and whether it (1) can be brought from the home institution (home) or (2) will need to be provided by The Grass Foundation (i.e., rented from MBL or provided on loan by a vendor).

- **Regarding Equipment:** The amount of rental and loaner equipment available at MBL is limited, so applicants are encouraged to bring equipment from their home institution, especially customized equipment, computers and software. Shipping will be paid by The Grass Foundation. Applicants should not directly contact vendors regarding equipment loans. Please note that the vendors and types of equipment vary from year to year, a list of previous lenders can be found on our website. Successful applicants will be contacted by the Associate Director of the Grass Fellowship Program soon after their selection to finalize equipment needs. In computing estimates of transportation costs, indicate which items are to be shipped to Woods Hole, their approximate weight and quoted overland freight rate for that weight and class of items. If planning to transport equipment with U-Haul or other rented truck, quote those rates round trip including destination charges. Provide costs in US\$.

**b. Special Facilities/Equipment.** Indicate any needs, if applicable.

**c. Laboratory Animals.** The Grass Foundation pays for the cost of purchasing, shipping and housing experimental animals in numbers appropriate to the project. Preference is given to research proposals appropriate to the facilities and organisms available at the MBL. These are typically marine and freshwater species (e.g., fish, amphibians), invertebrates (e.g., insects, gastropods), and small mammals such as mice or rats. The MBL does not have facilities to house large mammalian species nor is the MBL a Biosafety Level 2 Facility, i.e., pseudorabies virus work is NOT permitted; lentivirus work is permitted in cell culture only, NOT in whole animals.

- **Regarding Availability of Animals:** Indicate your intended source(s) of animals. This information is especially important for animals not available through the MBL and for uncommon species or animals that must be of particular ages, sizes, etc. Note that even marine species that are not native to New England are considered exotic species and require special care. Please contact the MBL and/or the Grass Foundation early in the application process to determine whether your animal model can be accommodated at the MBL the following summer.

- **Regarding Prior Experience:** Fellows are responsible for obtaining appropriate training in working with a particular species. If a fellow has not worked previously with a species, it is strongly advised that appropriate training be obtained before the start of the Fellowship. Alternatively, training may be done in collaboration with a scientist at the MBL during the Fellowship, which should be arranged in advance.
- **Regarding Animal Use Protocols:** Work with vertebrate animals and cephalopods, including any tissue collection from vertebrate animals, requires a protocol approved by the MBL Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (MBL-IACUC) and must comply with accepted practices for biomedical research. Each selected Fellow is responsible for writing his/her animal use protocol typically due in late February. Such protocols are institution-specific so even if there is an approved protocol for similar experiments at the home institution, approval must be obtained from the MBL-IACUC. Note that an approved MBL-IACUC protocol is necessary in order to start any experiment with a covered species.
- **Regarding Space:** Applicants should be aware that space at the MBL during the summer is extremely limited, and the little space that is available is expensive. This is particularly true for animal housing and behavioral experiments that require large observation areas. You will be asked to provide an estimate of square footage needed to house or perform experiments with animals not ordinarily accessible through MBL resources.

**d. Supplies and Miscellaneous Expenses.** Up to \$3000 is available to each Fellow to order items required to conduct the fellowship research project. Please indicate if you expect research supplies to exceed \$3000.

- **Regarding Supplies:** "Supplies" include chemicals, small items of equipment, time charges for use of core MBL facilities (microscopy/histology core includes EM, confocal, two-photon, cryostat) and all expendables. Core facility use will be charged at published MBL rates against the \$3000 research allowance. Please note that acceptance into the Program does not guarantee that a supply budget of more than \$3000 will be approved; requests are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- **Regarding Miscellaneous Expenses:** These funds cover any other unanticipated expenses such as out-of-pocket purchase of items from local hardware or office supply stores, or online vendors.
- **Regarding Accounting:** All expenditures in the above two categories are subject to review and approval. Each Fellow should keep a running account of expenses as they are incurred (including receipts) and is financially liable for any overruns.

## 2. TRAVEL EXPENSES

The Grass Foundation pays the cost of one round-trip to Woods Hole for the Fellow and his/her immediate family. "Immediate family" means the Fellow's spouse or legal domestic partner, and any dependent children.

- **Regarding Travel:** The Grass Foundation's policy is to pay for direct travel between the home institution and Woods Hole on the basis of (1) the mileage for private vehicle travel according to the current IRS rate or (2) airfare at the most economical rate to Boston or Providence (including fees for checking up to three bags per person), plus bus travel to Woods Hole, whichever is less. Bus fares can be found at [www.peterpanbus.com](http://www.peterpanbus.com). Estimate round-trip travel costs as closely as possible. In computing the Total Estimated Round-Trip Travel Expenses, please include the lesser of the airfare vs. private vehicle calculations. If your application is selected for funding, you will be asked to submit a Final Travel Estimate. The fee to obtain a visa, if needed, should be included in the estimate of travel expenses.

### 3. LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

**a. Housing.** The MBL, not The Grass Foundation, makes housing assignments for those accepted as Grass Fellows.

- **Regarding Housing:** Fellows share MBL cottages, either with (a) other fellows (three to a cottage), (b) their accompanying spouse/legal domestic partner and/or dependent children who are in residence for a substantial portion of the summer, or (c) both. Housing assignments are made by the MBL. The Grass Foundation pays the MBL directly for the cost of MBL housing and special housing requests cannot be guaranteed. If a Fellow chooses not to stay in MBL housing, he/she must make his/her own arrangements and pay all housing expenses (deposits, rent, utilities, etc.); in this case, The Grass Foundation will pay the Fellow an amount equivalent to the declined MBL housing (i.e., a cottage shared by multiple Fellows). Documentation of actual housing costs incurred must be submitted to the Foundation. Fellows should be aware that being paid directly by the Foundation for declined MBL housing may have tax consequences.

**b. Meals.** The Grass Foundation provides an allowance for the meals of the Fellow and his/her immediate family, as defined above. No details on meal costs need be entered in the application form.

- **Regarding Meals:** Meals are available at the MBL dining hall but Fellows (and accompanying family members, if applicable) generally prefer to prepare their own meals using the meal allowance provided. The Grass Foundation pays the MBL directly if the dining hall meal plan is selected. Fellows should be aware that being paid a meal allowance directly by the Foundation may have tax consequences.

### G. INSURANCE

The MBL requires that all Fellows have health insurance. Additionally, international Fellows must have health insurance as part of their visa requirements.

- **Regarding Insurance:** The Grass Foundation does not pay the costs of health or accident insurance. Fellows, both national and international, must ensure that they are suitably covered during the tenure of the Fellowship. A signature is required on Form GFA as a waiver of claims against The Grass Foundation for any illness, accident or injury during the Fellowship tenure or during travel to and from the program. Please make sure that your insurance covers any pre-existing conditions you might have.

### H. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Self-explanatory; please provide the requested information.

### I. DEADLINE & SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

*THE CLOSING DATE FOR RECEIPT OF APPLICATIONS AND LETTERS IS 1 DECEMBER, AT MIDNIGHT EASTERN STANDARD TIME (UTC-5). (Note that deadlines will change for the 2024 application period; applications for 2025 Fellowships will be due August 30, and awarded in fall 2024, to enable better advance planning.)*

Applications should be submitted electronically, as a single pdf file, to [gfp@grassfoundation.org](mailto:gfp@grassfoundation.org). If conversion to pdf format is inconvenient for an applicant, an MS Word file will be accepted. Likewise, if electronic submission is a hardship, a hard copy of the application will be accepted. Letters of recommendation, on institutional letterhead, may be submitted electronically or by standard mail.

Electronic submission: [gfp@grassfoundation.org](mailto:gfp@grassfoundation.org)

Mailing address:

The Grass Fellowship Program  
7 MBL Street  
Homestead  
Woods Hole, MA 02543  
USA

Applicants will be notified of The Grass Foundation's decision prior to the last week in January.

## **J. ACCEPTANCE OF CONDITIONS**

This section of Form GFA requires the applicant's signature, certifying that she/he has read and accepts all conditions and policies listed in the Grass Fellowship Program Guidelines, Application Instructions and Application Form. In case an electronic signature is used on this form, an original signature must be provided prior to acceptance into the program.