

January 17, 2024

**The Paul G. Allen Frontiers Group  
Letters of Intent (LOI)  
Allen Distinguished Investigator (ADI) Program  
Organelle Communication – 2024**

LOI release date: January 17, 2024

LOI submission deadline: February 14, 2024

### **Purpose**

**We request letters of intent for Allen Distinguished Investigator proposals in organelle communication research.** There will be up to three awards made for up to \$4.5 million in total research funding (no indirect costs supported). Awards will be \$1,500,000 for three years, at the rate of \$500,000 per year.

### **Topic Details**

**We seek a set of creative proposals that elucidate new perspectives on inter-organelle communication via membrane-membrane contact sites, with a focus on discovering new biological principles in these interactions.** Such new perspectives on membrane contact sites include exploration of new fundamental biological functions and mechanisms of action (e.g., via metabolic compartmentalization), and functional characterization of dynamic changes in membrane contact sites in time and intracellular space (e.g., mechanisms of regulation, coordination, and integration with other cellular processes and components).

We seek to support a set of projects in which high scientific risk is balanced by the potential for high scientific reward and that together span a range of perspectives. This may include evolutionary perspectives that encompass organelle membrane contact site manipulation, and membrane contact site biology writ broadly – the goal being to open new windows on potentially unifying principles that upend our current understanding of single-cell biology. Priority projects include (but are not limited to) those exploring membrane contact sites in their natural state *in vivo*, those uncovering new biological principles extending beyond one organelle pair, and those in which newly discovered biology makes a compelling case for a newly applied experimental approach. Priority projects would not include those for which there are already established funding mechanisms (e.g., the role of membrane contact sites in neurodegeneration or other disease states); however, leveraging expertise and approaches from these research areas into new areas is welcome.

### **Program Goals**

The Allen Distinguished Investigator program supports early-stage research with the potential to reinvent entire fields. The program seeks to have a lasting impact on the direction of research, aiming to serve as a catalyst upon which future research is founded. This program seeks to enable scientists to take risks with new ideas and approaches, and strongly believes in interdisciplinary approaches that allow scientists to look beyond their own disciplines, and to explore approaches with colleagues in other disciplines in order to bring new perspectives to challenging problems where traditional approaches within a discipline may be 'stuck.' The program is especially interested in approaches that are unlikely to receive funding from traditional government sources, including methodological and technological advances that

are often necessary complements to scientific advance and often difficult to fund through traditional sources. This program encourages and supports researchers including novel methodological, theoretical, and technological elements in their proposals.

### Eligibility Requirements

US or international scientists associated with eligible research organizations and pursuing independent research (e.g., faculty or similar positions) are eligible to apply. Allen Institute employees, fellows, Scientific Advisory Council (SAC) members or advisors are not eligible to apply during their tenure at the Allen Institute. Individuals, including project PIs, co-investigators, and collaborators, receiving support from the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation are not eligible to be part of applications while their award is active. No-cost extension periods are part of active awards. Collaborative teams are welcome; all team members must be associated with eligible research organizations. Eligible research organizations are nonprofit institutions with current 501(c)(3) Public Charity status from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), non-federal government entities, IRS-recognized tribes, and other organizations that conduct charitable activities. Applicants may not be private foundations as defined in Section 509(a) of the Internal Revenue Code. We ask that, if awarded, the leader commit a minimum of 20% effort to the ADI research activities. We believe that diverse perspectives are vital to science. We encourage researchers from across career stages, who are members of underrepresented groups, and/or who have followed less-traditional career paths to apply.

### LOI Format

Submissions consist of the following information:

- a) PIs and contact information
- b) Project description

Contact information including the LOI title, names of PIs, potential collaborators, and institutions is collected via the submission portal (see LOI Submission below). Contact information is not shared with reviewers.

Project descriptions may be reviewed in a double-blind method: identifying information related to PIs, potential collaborators, and institutions is not shared with reviewers; and reviewer identities and affiliations are not shared with submitters. Please ensure that the LOI title submitted with the contact information is identical to the LOI title on the project description. **Do not include identifying information such as names of PIs, collaborators, or institutions in project descriptions.**

We recommend that submitters use our template when preparing their project description. The project description should provide an overview of the project that you are submitting for consideration. No specific information is required. We recommend that you include information such as the relevance or timeliness of your proposed project; the potential impact of your project; and how your approach is particularly suited to complete your proposed project.

We request that all project descriptions be in English on 8 ½ x 11-inch paper size, using Arial, 11-point font, single spaced, with 1-inch margins top, bottom, left, and right. The page limit for project descriptions is 1 page. Up to five references are allowed; references are not included in the 1-page limit. Up to one figure is permitted and not included in the 1-page limit. The figure must be a new figure made for the LOI and may not include any identifying information. Please place references and figure, if any, at the end of the project description.

## LOI Submission

LOIs are due by **12 noon Pacific Time on February 14, 2024**, and should be submitted through the submission portal accessible on our [website](#).

The project description (including figure, if any) must be submitted as a **single PDF** file. The filename should **not** include identifying information.

## Questions

Answers to frequently asked questions can be found on our [website](#). Questions not on this list may be submitted to [frontiers@alleninstitute.org](mailto:frontiers@alleninstitute.org). Please use “2024 Organelle Communication Question” as the email subject.

We try to respond to all emails but may not be able to due to the volume of questions received. Please note that LOI questions submitted after 10 AM Pacific Time on February 12, 2024, are unlikely to be answered.

## Application Key Dates

Letter of Intent Due	February 14, 2024
Notification of LOI Outcome	by April 5, 2024*
Full Proposal Deadline	May 15, 2024*
Finalist Interviews	July/August 2024*
Notification of Award	September 2024*
Award Start	October 2024*

\*Tentative date

## Selection Process

Up to 18 LOIs will be invited to submit full proposals for consideration. Up to six of the submitted proposals may be selected for finalist interviews, which will be held by videoconference. Up to three awards will be made.

LOIs and proposals may be confidentially reviewed by a panel of experts tailored for the topic, and this panel would make recommendations to The Paul G. Allen Frontiers Group, a division of the Allen Institute, which acts as the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation’s agent and subject matter expert, provides counsel, and supports the administration of the awards. The Paul G. Allen Family Foundation has the final decision on the award.

Members of the panel of experts and any advisors serve anonymously. Their identities as well as correspondence, evaluations and deliberations are kept confidential. This policy enables advisors and evaluators to provide their honest impressions independent of outside influence. Past awardees may be asked to act as future evaluators and advisors.