



RESTORE VISION 20/20 EVALUATION PROCESS

The Foundation Fighting Blindness (FFB) relies on its expert Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) to peer review all grant applications (see [here](#) for composition of the SAB). The peer review process incorporates best-practices from biomedical research-funding institutions and organizations internationally and involves a face-to-face meeting.

Prior to the in-person meeting, each proposal is assigned a primary reviewer, a secondary reviewer, and a reader. Both the primary and secondary reviewers compose concise written reviews of the proposals, addressing the five criteria outlined below. These reviews are collated and circulated to the full review committee. The reader does not write reviews, but commits special attention to assigned grants so he/she is prepared to participate in a substantive discussion of the proposal during the in-person meeting.

During the in-person meeting, the first reviewer begins by providing a verbal overview and assessment of the proposal. Next, the second reviewer and reader provide additional comments before the proposal is discussed by the full review committee. The full review committee then agrees on a consensus score, which is used to rank all the proposals received.

The Scientific Officer records detailed notes throughout the in-person meeting. These notes are used to provide constructive feedback to all applicants and to communicate details of each proposal to the FFB's Board of Directors. The recommendations from the SAB review meeting are shared with the FFB's Mission Investment Steering Committee (MISC). The MISC is a standing committee of the FFB's Board of Directors, which also includes non-Board members, who bring exceptional expertise that is uniquely relevant to the FFB's mission. The mandate of the MISC is to advise the Board of Directors regarding the alignment of mission funding and the FFB's strategic priorities. The FFB's Board of Directors is responsible for determining the final funding allocation.

REVIEW CRITERIA

Reviewers will evaluate specific criteria to determine each proposal's alignment with the Restore Vision 20/20 Initiative. The four-year goal of this initiative is to directly stimulate the initiation of at least one first-in-human clinical trial for patients living with retinitis pigmentosa or other late-stage retinal degenerative diseases that involve the loss of photoreceptors.

Winning teams will be eligible for two years of funding, valued at up to \$400,000 per year for a total of \$800,000 over two years. The key overarching criteria for this grant competition is an assessment of a proposal's likelihood of achieving the Restore Vision 20/20 Initiative's four-year



goal within the funding period. Therefore, each team is required to develop a four-year translation plan that clearly identifies principal deliverables within each year that are aimed at moving the research from the bench to the bedside. After two-years, teams will be eligible to apply for additional funding to complete their four-year plan. The FFB recognizes that \$400,000/year for four years may not provide sufficient funds to support all of the necessary research and safety studies that are required by Health Canada to initiate a first-in-human clinical trial. Toxicity and biodistribution studies should be identified as best as possible as potential extra costs beyond the \$400,000 budget.

Funding partnerships with other foundations, institutions, health charities or industry are not mandatory, but are welcomed.

Reviewers will provide an overall score to each proposal using the 10-point FFB scale, outlined below. In addition, reviewers will provide written comments about each of the following criteria.

1. **Scientific Excellence** – the extent to which the proposed research is based on a strong rationale, introduces innovative ideas, and solid hypotheses. Is the proposed research competitive on the international scale? Is the proposed research more likely to succeed than other similar research being carried out by other groups, and if so, why? What is unique about the project? What unmet need does it address in the potential therapeutic landscape?
2. **Approach and methodology** – the extent to which the proposed research uses the most appropriate approaches to reach the stated objectives of the project. Are the research methods to be used appropriate and sufficiently robust to ensure that high quality results will be generated?
3. **Excellence of the team** – the extent to which the principal applicant and team of co-applicants/collaborators have the relevant expertise and proven track record; extent to which the team has identified a plan to promote and foster collaborations and grow its funding network to achieve its long-term translational plan (e.g., identifying potential industry sponsors).
4. **Deliverables and potential impact**– extent to which the project describes a viable therapeutic modality or product candidate; extent to which the team demonstrates a logical long-term strategy with specific deliverables identified within each year (in the four-year translation plan) to ensure the project's success; the extent to which the deliverables can be completed in the proposed timeframe; the extent to which the



therapeutic modality or product candidate stands to impact patients living with late-stage retinitis pigmentosa (RP) in a foreseeable future.

Does the proposed research have the potential to affect the development of therapies for a broader range of retinal degenerative diseases, beyond late-stage RP?

- 5. Translation plan** – Extent to which the translation plan to the clinic is clearly described and viable (e.g. intellectual property; technology manufacturing and scale-up; regulatory and clinical trial expertise identified; industry receptors identified); extent to which the therapeutic modality or product candidate will be amenable to clinical development and the filing of a Clinical Trial Application (CTA) or an Investigational New Drug (IND).

SCORING

Proposals that receive an overall consensus score of less than 7 will be identified as not fundable. All written reviews will be sent to the applicant(s), therefore please include comments to help the investigator on presenting or conducting their research more effectively. External reviewers may be sought for proposals that fall outside of the SAB's expertise.

FUNDABLE		
Exceptional - exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses	10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outstanding - extremely strong with negligible weaknesses	9	<input type="checkbox"/>
Excellent - very strong with only some minor weaknesses	8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very good – very strong but with numerous minor weaknesses	7	<input type="checkbox"/>
NOT FUNDABLE		
Good - strong but at least one moderate weakness	6	<input type="checkbox"/>
Satisfactory - some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fair - some strengths but with at least one major weakness	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marginal - a few strengths and a few major weaknesses	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor - very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very poor - no strengths and numerous major weaknesses	1	<input type="checkbox"/>