

BD² Data Science Fellow Request for Applications (RFA)

June 2026

PERTINENT DATES

June 1, 2026	Application window opens
June 9, 2026	RFA Webinar
July 31, 2026	Application window closes
Late August 2026	Awards announced
November 5 and 6, 2026	In-person meeting for Data Science Fellows

The BD² Data Science Fellowship is a new BD² funding program to support talented postdoctoral researchers completing data science projects within the BD² network. The two-year fellowship provides up to \$125,000 per year, for a total of \$250,000 over two years, to work on data-related projects that are built on current BD²-funded work. BD² Data Science Fellows will be affiliated with a BD²-funded institution and project and will be mentored by a BD²-funded Lead PI, co-PI, or site lead who will provide guidance on the project. This exciting opportunity provides support for early-career researchers, especially those aiming to enter the bipolar disorder research field, and gives current BD² teams additional resources to bolster their data science analysis capabilities.

Goals

The BD² Data Science Fellowship will award up to eight grants for postdoctoral researchers to work on exciting projects that have a substantial need for data science expertise. These awards will provide financial support for early-career researchers to develop their expertise and independence through research on a variety of data science projects focused on bipolar disorder. This program provides a new pipeline of talent to bolster the bipolar disorder research community.

As many BD² teams are amassing robust clinical, omics, and other research datasets, these fellows will provide new resources for the BD² network to gain deeper insight into bipolar disorder. These fellows will provide expertise dedicated to generating new discoveries and harnessing the potential of the datasets that have already been collected. Their projects will lead to a better understanding of the biology, trajectory, and mechanism of bipolar disorder to ultimately improve interventions.

We encourage individuals who are not currently named investigators on a BD²-funded project to apply.

The Opportunity

BD² provides unique opportunities to strengthen the bipolar disorder field. This mechanism builds on the same spirit and provides two-year fellowships, totaling \$250,000, to postdoctoral researchers who have expertise in data science. Successful applicants will be funded to complete their proposed data science project using existing datasets that were collected under BD² funding. For example:

- Discovery of new insights through analysis of an existing BD² dataset(s)
- Development of computational tools, including machine learning models or other analytical pipelines, that can be used to analyze, clean, or visualize BD² datasets

Additional funding has been allocated to specifically support individuals training at NYC-based institutions, but awards will be made available across the network.

The initial funding will cover the first year of the grant. The second year of funding will be disbursed if BD² determines that the project milestones have been sufficiently met.

This fellowship can:

- Support a postdoctoral fellow who is currently a member of a BD² team,
- Support a postdoctoral fellow who is currently at a BD²-funded institution, who is not yet working on the BD² project,
- Support a postdoctoral fellow to join a BD²-funded institution and work on a BD² project. In this case, the applicant is expected to relocate to the BD²-funded institution if awarded, and the letters of support must indicate commitment from the BD² lead to hire the applicant if funded.
- Support a postdoctoral fellow working to align data processing or analysis across teams or sites.

Eligibility

Postdoctoral fellows can be from, or plan to join, any BD² team, including Discovery Grant teams, Genetics and Brain Omics platforms, and Integrated Network sites. Applicants external to BD² must provide a letter of support from a BD² Lead PI, co-PI, or site lead, and must join that institution if the fellowship is awarded.

Applicants must:

- Be designated as a postdoctoral researcher or equivalent at the time of submission,
- Be affiliated with a BD²-funded institution, including subgrantee institutions, at the time of award start,
- Provide a letter of support from a BD²-funded Lead PI or co-PI, who will be the mentor for the fellow and their project,

- Commit to dedicating at least 75% full-time effort (FTE) on their proposed BD² data science project if selected.
- Commit to the full two years of the fellowship if funded, which includes being under the mentorship of the BD²-funded PI during this time. Applicants who can devote a portion of the two years to the proposed project will not be prioritized.
- Have demonstrated expertise in data science that can be applied to a BD² project. Experience in relevant biological or psychiatric fields is preferred but not required. Applicants do not need to currently be rostered on or involved with a BD² project.
- Propose a data science project that is centered on bipolar disorder and utilizes existing BD² datasets. These datasets can be inclusive of datasets from BD² institutions other than the postdoctoral fellow's affiliated institution. Outside datasets can also be incorporated into the projects if the fellow obtains all necessary permissions and IRB approval and meets all regulatory requirements.

Ineligibility

The grant will not primarily fund the collection of de novo datasets.

Individuals who have not yet received a terminal degree are ineligible.

Individuals who are classified at levels such as instructor, senior researcher, lecturer, or junior faculty are ineligible. However, awardees may transition to these levels during the course of the fellowship, as long as they remain at the same institution.

Application Timeline

The Fellowship RFA portal will open on June 1, 2026, followed by a webinar soon thereafter. The portal will close on July 31, 2026, and awardees will be announced in August.

Application

Applications will be submitted via the SurveyMonkey Apply portal at bd2.smapply.io. The application should convey the scientific concepts and hypotheses that will be tested, as well as outline the corresponding strategies. All documents should be uploaded as a PDF and use Arial 11-point font with margins of 1.0 inch.

The individual components of the application are detailed below.

Project Details (Short form)

Applicants must complete a short form in the application portal with basic project details. This form will include:

- Project title
- Lay summary (limit 250 words): Describe your project to a public, non-scientific audience.
- Overarching hypothesis (1 sentence): Provide the main hypothesis or scientific question that the study will address.

- **Project mentor(s):** Provide the name, institutional affiliation, and BD² affiliation of the applicant's mentor(s) for the project. There must be at least one mentor who is a funded BD² investigator, as part of a roster for a currently funded project.

If funded, these responses, including the lay summary, may be posted on the BD² website or other BD²-produced, public-facing materials.

Scientific Rationale (Up to 3 pages including figures)

The Scientific Rationale should outline the project goals and plan across the sections defined below.

- **Scientific proposal:** Describe the proposed project, including the following sections:
 - Central question the project seeks to address and the bipolar disorder-relevant context
 - Proposed BD² datasets that will be used
 - Proposed analytical methods (e.g., statistical tools, software/code, etc.)
 - Power analysis demonstrating that the proposed dataset is sufficient to address the central question
- **Impact statement:** Describe the potential impact of this project on advancing the understanding of bipolar etiology, progression, diagnosis, or care. Impacts may include identifying a potential therapeutic target, developing a clinical prediction tool, or revealing an underlying biological pathway.
- **Milestones:** Outline project milestones in six-month increments. These should be specific, attainable, and measurable. If awarded, milestones will be used to assess progress throughout the funding period.

If funded, this proposal will be posted on the BD² Hub (a virtual community platform viewable by the BD² Network only).

Applicant Information (2 pages)

- **Applicant statement:** Provide a brief narrative of the applicant's expertise and academic/clinical profile.
- **Mentorship plan:** Provide a brief narrative of the mentorship plan.
- **Resources:** Provide a catalog of resources available to the applicant. Resources include expertise, equipment, clinical and research cores, existing datasets, and access to biobanks.

Additional Uploads

- **Applicant biosketch:** Upload a current biosketch. The previous NIH biosketch format (used prior to January 2026) is recommended, though applicants may use any version. If an applicant does not have a biosketch, they may use a CV.
- **References cited:** Provide citations supporting the scientific rationale of your proposed project. Include a DOI link for each citation. There is no specific formatting requirement.
- **Letters of commitment:** Upload the documents listed below that affirm all relevant parties are committed to the execution of the project if funded.

- Institutional commitment – Signed letter from the affiliated institution that demonstrates commitment to administering the grant according to the existing written grant agreement between that institution and BD², under which the Data Science Fellowship will be administered as an amendment if awarded. The letter should be signed by a department chair or a relevant authorized organizational representative, such as the Dean of Sponsored Research.
 - If the proposed Data Science Fellow is affiliated with an institution that is a subgrantee of BD² (i.e., an institution without a direct agreement with BD²), the Institutional Commitment letter must be signed by both the subgrantee and the primary grantee, acknowledging that the fellowship must be administered through a subaward, unless otherwise agreed to with BD².
- Mentorship commitment – Signed letter from the BD²-funded investigator who will serve as the fellow's mentor, demonstrating commitment to both overseeing the project and mentoring the fellow. If there are multiple proposed mentors, they may either provide one letter signed by all or each provide a separate letter.
- Data use commitment – Signed letter from the team/site lead(s) who are responsible for generating the proposed BD²-funded data source, affirming that the dataset will be available to the fellow and will be ready for use in line with the project timeline. If the proposed mentor is also the individual responsible for the proposed dataset, they may combine the Mentorship Commitment and Data Use Commitment into one letter. If the proposed project leverages the Integrated Network study dataset, an approved data request will satisfy this requirement.

Detailed Budget (use template)

Each application must include a detailed budget in USD, prepared using the template provided via the application portal. Acceptable expenditures include:

- Salary and fringe benefits: The salary of the Data Science Fellow must reflect at least 75% FTE and must meet or exceed the minimum level of the current NIH NRSA Stipend at the fellow's experience level. All other salaries represented in the budget must adhere to the current NIH Salary Cap.
- Equipment: Equipment includes computers and other physical devices. Because new data collection is not the primary aim of this project, the budget should not primarily be laboratory equipment.
- Software and data storage: Any programs or platforms used for the analysis, processing, or storage of data.
- Project-related travel: Costs associated with travel to scientific conferences, short courses, or on-site training.
- Indirect costs: Up to 15% of the total budget can be used to support institutional infrastructure. The maximum allowable budget is inclusive of indirect costs.

Note that cost differences associated with making a publication open access will be covered by BD² and do not need to be budgeted in the proposal.

Terms of Funding

For applications selected for funding, the budget will be distributed per the following terms:

- All funding will be provided in USD. For international applicants, note that BD² is not responsible for changes in conversion rates.
- Funds will be paid to the grantee institution only. Under no circumstances will funding be paid to an individual.
- Funds will be disbursed annually to the grantee institution.
- The grantee institution will be responsible for administering subawards to any subgrantee institution(s).

Selection Criteria

Applications that display strength and creativity across the following domains are more likely to succeed. The Data Science Fellowship selection criteria are based on the following characteristics:

- **Scientific merit:** The scientific rationale and proposal are of high quality, and the described use of data will adequately address bipolar etiology, progression, diagnosis, and/or care.
- **Technical feasibility:** The study design is adequately rigorous and appropriately statistically powered to produce significant findings, even in the absence of results that support the hypotheses within the original application.
- **Potential impact:** The study will significantly advance the understanding of bipolar disorder etiology, progression, diagnosis, and care, leveraging smart partnerships and the effective use of existing resources and expertise.
- **Mentorship strength:** The applicant has clear connections to a BD² PI, with access to the required datasets, IRB requirements, and mentorship to make the project successful.
- **Cost realism:** The budget is realistic and adequately supports personnel, equipment, overhead, and other needs to effectively carry out the project.
- **Relationship to funded work:** The proposed study is meaningfully additive to current BD²-funded work, is unlikely to be completed without additional funding, and will not negatively impact progress on primary goals of the Discovery Research teams and/or Integrated Network sites.

Review Process

The BD² Scientific Leads, Program Team, and Scientific Steering Committees (SSCs) will conduct a multi-step review process.

- **Eligibility review:** Prior to content review, all applications will be assessed to ensure that all eligibility criteria listed in this RFA are met. Applications are subject to rejection if one or more of these criteria are not met.
- **Scientific review:** Members of the SSCs and BD² Program Team will review each application to ensure that its scientific scope aligns with this RFA and score each proposal based on the Selection Criteria above. Funding will not be considered for applications that are out of scope. SSC members will not review applications for which they have COIs.

- **Overarching scope review:** Applications will be reviewed in partnership with BD² leadership to ensure that potentially funded grants fit within BD²'s overall scientific vision and mission. As the development of the bipolar research community is important to the goals of BD², this review will take into consideration the strength of the applicant and their mentorship plan.

Evaluation and Monitoring

Once the grants are awarded, grantee progress will be monitored by the BD² Program Team on a bi-annual basis.

- **6- and 18-month updates:** At the 6-month and 18-month marks, each fellow will provide a short update on their milestone progress and any challenges they have faced along the way. Milestones will be outlined in the applications, and disclosing progress against these milestones on a bi-annual basis will provide clarity on scientific advancements or setbacks made by the fellow.
- **Annual report:** Fellows will provide a more detailed annual report at the 12-month mark. This report includes a 1-2 page narrative statement, an update on milestone progress, and a description of challenges. A budget update will also be required. This document will be used to determine whether sufficient progress has been made to merit the second year of funding.
- **Final report:** After the 24-month scope of work is complete, each fellow will provide a report highlighting the accomplishments and challenges of their fellowship. The report will include an assessment of milestones and a budget review.

Network Participation

BD² Data Science Fellows will be expected to integrate into the BD² network, which consists of a vast community of scientific and clinical experts in the bipolar disorder field. Network participation will include joining the virtual community space (BD² Hub) and attending virtual seminars and relevant workgroup meetings. BD² will also require regular virtual meetings among the group of Data Science Fellows and attendance at in-person convenings, which will be funded by BD² outside of the project budgets.

Note that the first in-person meeting is tentatively planned for November 5-6, 2026 in New York City. Awarded fellows are expected to attend this meeting and all applicants should therefore hold these dates. Travel to the meeting will be covered by BD² outside of the fellowship.

Grant Terms and Policies

Data Science Fellowships are supplementary funds to an existing grant agreement between BD² and an institution. This funding will be provided through an amendment to the existing grant and will be pursuant to the same grant terms. Each funded organization will be required to co-sign the amendment within thirty (30) days from receipt of notice of the award and prior to funds being released.

BD²'s grant terms include, but are not limited to, the following items:

Use of Funds

Each fellow will be applying for a grant that would provide up to \$250,000 over 2 years.

- Use of funds: Funds may be used for scientific and technical personnel, supplies, and standard equipment needs directly related to the successful execution of the proposed scope of work. This may also include travel to relevant conferences and events, but does not include laboratory or facility renovations.
- Carryover funding: Upon request, BD² will consider a no-cost extension for unused research funds upon request. Otherwise, any funds not expended or committed for the purposes of the grant by the conclusion of the grant term must be returned to BD² unless otherwise agreed to by BD² in writing.
- Indirect costs: Indirect costs are included in the \$250,000 award. Up to 15% of the entire grant budget may be slated for indirect costs, e.g., no more than \$37,500 for an award of \$250,000. Note that awards may be lower than the maximum \$250,000 total grant. In such cases, only up to 15% of the specified grant budget may be allocated to indirect costs.
- Unexpended funds: Any funds not expended or committed for the purposes of the grant by the conclusion of the grant term must be returned to BD² unless otherwise agreed to by BD² in writing.
- Supplemental funding: If a funded organization proposes to supplement any funds provided by BD² with funds provided by a third party, the organization must first provide notice to BD² and must ensure that the funding terms associated with any such third-party funds do not preclude sharing of data or publication of project results as outlined in this RFA.

Data Sharing

Open and responsible data sharing is a key tenet for preventing roadblocks and delays in generating research findings. Therefore, data sharing and open science are foundational pillars of BD². Teams and their affiliated institutions should review the BD² Open Science Policy, as the Data Science Fellowships are pursuant to the terms therein. Per the Open Science Policy, the terms that funded collaborations must comply with include, but are not limited to:

- Sharing of all research outputs: All BD²-funded research outputs, including datasets, protocols, code/software, and newly generated lab materials (e.g., tools, reagents, cell lines), must be made publicly available to the scientific community in an open-access format no later than the time of final submission for publication. Sharing outputs as early as possible and prior to publication is encouraged. Outputs are expected to be shared in accordance with FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable) standards and to include all necessary metadata and documentation. Human-derived data should be as open as possible, but as closed as necessary, to ensure that protected health information remains private.
- Posting preprints and using an open-access format for publications: All publications related to this funded work must be submitted to a preprint server, such as bioRxiv, before or concurrently with the first submission to a journal. This funding opportunity requires publication in an open-access journal format and publishing with the least restrictive license. In addition, early sharing of null and incremental results, within the network and publicly, is encouraged. Scientific publications, preprints, and presentations that result from this award must be acknowledged as being supported by this funding.

Intellectual Property

Intellectual property resulting from, created, developed, conceived, or reduced to practice in whole or in part with funding from BD², including all patents, copyrights, trademarks, trade secrets, and other rights therein (Grant IP) would be subject to obligations on the recipient organization to:

- Commercialize any Grant IP that has the potential to benefit patients who have bipolar disorder;
- Allow BD² or its sublicensee to commercialize any such Grant IP that the grantee is unwilling or unable to commercialize;
- Widely disseminate through publication the results of research funded with grants from BD²; and
- Grant a research license to BD², the BD²'s founding funders, and all of their respective non-profit grantees to use and practice Grant IP in the field of bipolar disorder.

Funding Awarded in BD²'s Discretion

Responding to this RFA and/or submitting an application does not entitle any individual or institution to receive funding from BD². Funding, if any, would be provided in BD²'s sole discretion pursuant to the terms of a written grant agreement executed by BD² and the selected grantee organization, the terms of which BD² may require the PI to acknowledge.

Contact Information

You will receive an automated email confirmation once your application is submitted. If you do not receive confirmation within 24 hours of submitting your application, please check spam filters, then contact DiscoveryGrants@BipolarDiscoveries.org.

For inquiries about scientific priorities, eligibility requirements, application submission, as well as general and media inquiries, please contact: DiscoveryGrants@BipolarDiscoveries.org.