EQT Foundation opens applications for science grants to overcome the blood-brain barrier and transform CNS drug delivery

- EQT Foundation opens applications for deeptech solutions grants, tackling one of medicine's most formidable biological barriers
- The program will award between EUR 25,000 and EUR 100,000
- The call focuses on breakthrough technologies to cross or modulate the blood-brain barrier for therapeutic delivery to the brain

EQT Foundation is launching a new open call for proposals under its Science Grants program, focused on breakthrough innovations to cross or modulate the blood-brain barrier (BBB) for therapeutic delivery to the central nervous system. The program will award catalytic, non-dilutive grants of €25,000 to €100,000 to researchers developing high-risk, high-impact deeptech solutions with the potential to unlock a new era of Central Nervous System (CNS) medicine. Designed to accelerate bold scientific ideas with strong translational potential, the call is open to scientists affiliated with accredited nonprofit institutions worldwide.

The blood-brain barrier protects the central nervous system, but it also blocks more than 98% of small molecule drugs and nearly 100% of large molecule therapeutics from reaching the brain. [1] This biological firewall remains one of the greatest bottlenecks in medicine, leaving hundreds of millions of patients with neurological disorders such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, brain tumors, ALS, and rare pediatric neurological conditions without effective treatments. Breakthroughs in BBB delivery have the potential to fundamentally transform outcomes for patients facing devastating and currently incurable diseases.

This grant call aims to support frontier science that enables precise, safe, and scalable delivery of therapeutics to the brain. The Foundation is particularly interested in translational proposals that begin in the lab but are clearly designed to move toward clinical and real-world deployment, helping to de-risk and accelerate the next generation of CNS therapies.

The program seeks research at the intersection of deeptech innovation and therapeutic application, with a focus on:

- Novel BBB-crossing delivery platforms: engineered vectors, capsids, nanoparticles, receptor-mediated transport systems, shuttle peptides, molecular Trojan horses, exosome engineering, and cell-type-specific targeting strategies that enable therapeutic cargo to cross the BBB with precision and safety

- Physical and device-based BBB modulation: focused ultrasound innovations, energy-based or mechanical approaches, and implantable or minimally invasive devices that transiently and reversibly open the BBB for localized or systemic CNS drug delivery
- Biological and molecular BBB modulation: tight junction modulators, osmotic or chemical permeabilizers, and genetically or pharmacologically induced transient BBB opening with spatiotemporal control and strong safety rationale
- CNS-targeted gene therapies and large molecule delivery: AAV capsid engineering, alternative viral vectors, non-viral systems such as lipid or polymeric nanoparticles, bispecific antibodies, antibody-drug conjugates, and RNA platforms with demonstrated or plausible brain penetration
- BBB models, biomarkers, and translational tools: human-relevant in vitro BBB models, imaging and biomarker platforms for non-invasive assessment of BBB integrity and drug penetration, AI-driven permeability prediction tools linked to specific delivery strategies, and high-throughput screening platforms that accelerate translational validation

Cilia Holmes Indahl, CEO of EQT Foundation, comments: "The blood-brain barrier is one of the greatest unsolved challenges in medicine, limiting our ability to treat millions of patients with serious neurological conditions. Through this grant program, we want to back ambitious scientists developing transformative technologies that can safely unlock the brain and fundamentally change what is possible in CNS care.""

In addition to funding, selected grantees will benefit from access to EQT's global network, including technical experts, potential industry partners, and tailored commercialization and founder support to help bridge the gap from scientific discovery to scalable patient impact.

Applications close on April 7, 2026, at 23:59 CET.

Proposals will be reviewed by a panel of scientific, technical, and translational experts. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to interviews with the EQT Foundation team, with final decisions communicated shortly thereafter.

To apply, visit:
https://eqtgroup.com/eqt-foundation/grant-submission

Contact
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1) Brain. (2026). *Volume 149, Issue 2* [Special issue]. Oxford University Press. https://academic.oup.com/brain/issue/149/2?login=false