**THE XPLORER PRIZE**

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

**2025 Competition**

**I. Eligibility**

1. THE XPLORER PRIZE (The Prize) is open to scientists who

* have obtained a doctorate degree
* currently work full-time in the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong SAR, or Macau SAR (regardless of nationality)
* are 45 years old or younger for males (born on or after January 1, 1979) or 48 years old or younger for females (born on or after January 1, 1976).

2. What is the core concept advocated by the Prize?

The Prize aims to unleash the full potential of young scientists and push the frontiers of basic science and frontier technologies by encouraging them to engage in original research.

3. How are younger applicants encouraged?

In 2025, The XPLORER PRIZE will provide the opportunity to allocate one quota in each award field. Following the principle of selecting the best rather than filling quotas, this opportunity is intended to recognize outstanding young scientists (35 years old or younger for males, 38 years old or younger for females).

4. What is the program policy regarding working full-time in the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong SAR or Macau SAR?

To be eligible, applicants must have begun working full-time in the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong SAR, or Macau SAR on or before January 1, 2025, and not hold an active employment contract with an institution in another region.

5. Are researchers working in the private industry eligible to apply for The Prize?

Yes. The Prize is open to researchers in basic sciences and frontier technologies working in the private industry.

6. Can I apply for both THE XPLORER PRIZE and the New Cornerstone Investigator Program?

* Applicants may only apply to one of the two programs in any given calendar year.
* THE XPLORER PRIZE recipients can apply for the New Cornerstone Investigator program.
* The New Cornerstone Investigator Program recipients cannot apply for THE XPLPRER PRIZE.

7. Can unsuccessful applicants apply again?

Yes. There is no restriction on how many times an applicant may apply, as long as they remain eligible.

8. Can recipients of the Prize who have completed their funding period and still meet the eligibility criteria apply again?

No.

**II. Application Process**

1. How do I apply?

Nominations and individual applications will be accepted.

1. Nomination
* The Foundation invites external nominators to nominate candidates (nominees) and recommend two references (full professors or equivalent) for each candidate. Each nominator can nominate one candidate each year, valid for 3 years.
* The Program Office will send out invitations to the candidate and references.
* Candidates should submit their application via The Prize’s official website before April 15, 2025, at 12:00 midnight (Beijing Time).
* References should submit their recommendation letters via the link sent to their emails before April 30, 2025, at 12:00 midnight (Beijing Time). The recommendation letters are valid for three years. If the Program Office does not receive sufficient recommendation letters for a candidate before the due date, the candidate will be disqualified from this round of competition.
1. Individual applications
* The Foundation also accepts individual applications. Applications should be submitted via The Prize’s official website before April 15, 2025, at 12:00 midnight (Beijing Time). Candidates should also submit the names and contact information of three references (full professors or equivalent).
* The Program Office will send out invitations to the three references upon receiving the application materials. References should submit their recommendation letters via the link sent to their emails before April 30, 2025, at 12:00 midnight (Beijing Time). The recommendation letters are valid for three years. If the Program Office does not receive sufficient recommendation letters for a candidate before the due date, the candidate will be disqualified from this round of competition.
* As the references will only be notified after candidates submits their application materials, candidates must plan accordingly to allow enough time for their references to submit recommendation letters before the deadline.
1. Shall I resubmit my application if I am subsequently nominated after I have applied?

If you are nominated after having submitted your application, you should add your nomination code and resubmit your application.

1. Do I have a better chance of being selected if I receive a nomination?

All applicants are equally and objectively evaluated against the same criteria by the Review Committee.

1. Who are the nominators?

The list of nominators is kept confidential. A pool of invited external nominators has been chosen from relevant fields. Once the application process begins, nominators will be invited to propose candidates.

1. How many candidates can one nominator nominate every year? Can the nominator serve as reference of other candidates?

Each nominator may only nominate one new candidate per year. Nominators may also serve as reference for one other candidate.

1. Can one nominate or recommend his/her coworkers?

Yes.

1. What is the program policy regarding “the nomination valid for three years”?

From 2023, all nominations will remain valid for three years (including the year of the nomination and the next two years). For example, a nomination letter written in 2024 will remain effective in 2025 and 2026.

1. Will recommendation letters written by international researchers be accepted?

Yes. International researchers will receive bilingual (English and Chinese) email notices and instructions.

1. What is the program policy regarding “the recommendation letters valid for three years”?

Beginning in 2021, all recommendation letters are valid for three years (including the year of the recommendation and the next two years). Recommendation letters submitted in 2023 and 2024 are still valid in 2025.

**III. Application Components**

1. What are the components of the application？

Each application includes the following components:

* Personal information, education and work experience, etc.
* Research accomplishments, grants, and representative publications, etc.
* Field of application and five-year research plan.
1. What is the program policy regarding representative publications?

Applicants should select representative articles and books that were published within the last 5 years (i.e., since January 2020).

1. What is required for the Five-Year Research Plan?

A template is available in the application system. Applicants are expected to describe originality of their research plan, what and how they are doing to do in no more than 3000 words, in either English or Chinese. For applications of Interdisciplinary Studies, please highlight the interdisciplinarity of applicant’s current research and future research plan, such as utilizing interdisciplinary knowledge or research methods to address important and complex scientific problems; or using the ideas and methods from one discipline innovatively to study the scientific problems in another discipline, resulting in outstanding achievements and promoting the development of other disciplines.

1. In evaluating the candidate, which carries more weight, past achievements or the future plan?

Being future-orientated, the Prize supports the most promising candidates to unleash their potential and explore important scientific questions. The future plan will be given more weight during the review process.

1. Can I update my application after submitting it?

Yes. You can make changes to your application before April 15, 2025, at 12:00 midnight (Beijing Time). The updated version will replace previous version(s).

1. How are the intellectual property and confidentiality of candidates and their application materials protected?

We are sensitive in protecting the intellectual property and confidentiality of the candidates and their application materials. For instance, all materials (both electronic and printed version) to be reviewed are watermarked. Everyone involved in the review process must sign a confidentiality agreement.

**IV. Selection**

1. How will the awardees be selected?

All submitted applications that meet eligibility criteria will undergo review by domestic and international experts from relevant fields. There are currently three rounds of review, with shortlisted candidates being interviewed in the final round.

1. How will The Prize avoid potential conflicts of interest?

Strict safeguards and procedures will be followed to ensure the fairness and objectivity of the review process. All review panel members must disclose any potential conflicts of interest prior to participating in the review process, including but not limited to, coworker, supervisor-student, or close family relationship, belonging to the same research team, research or publication collaboration (ongoing or within the past 5 years), commercial collaboration, competition, and nomination or recommendation. If there is a supervisor-student or relative relationship, or if they belong to the same research team, the reviewer must abstain from evaluating all candidates in this round. If there are other conflicts of interest, the reviewer must abstain from evaluating the corresponding candidate.

1. Will institutional or regional balance be considered in making funding decisions?

No. Efforts are made to ensure the objectiveness and fairness of the review. Funding decisions will be made based on merit.

1. Will applicants be required to do anything during the review?

Shortlisted applicants will be informed to prepare for the final interview, usually one month in advance. Applicants will not be required to do anything else during the review.

1. Will applicants receive written comments from the reviewers?

No. The shortlisted applicants will receive reviewers’ oral feedback during the interview. No written feedback will be provided to any applicants.

**V. Funding**

1. For applications of Medical Sciences, what kind of applications/work are supported?

* The Prize supports young researchers to explore the nature and patterns of diseases, and integrate biomedical sciences with clinical medicine;
* The Prize supports physician scientists to carry out innovative researches aiming at developing new techniques and methods to advance clinical diagnosis and treatment;
* The Prize supports exploration of basic science solutions that are fundamental to escalate pharmaceutical R&D and biomedical engineering.

2. For applications of Interdisciplinary Studies, what kind of applications/work are supported?

The field of Interdisciplinary Studies awards emerging scientific frontiers, promoting the integration of different disciplines and ultimately development of basic science. It encourages utilizing interdisciplinary knowledge or research methods to address important and complex scientific problems; or using the ideas and methods from one discipline innovatively to study the scientific problems in another discipline, resulting in outstanding achievements and promoting the development of other disciplines.

3. How many awardees will be funded in 2025?

The Prize anticipates selecting up to 50 awardees in 2025.

4. What is the level of funding?

Each awardee will receive 3 million RMB, which will be paid in 5 annual installments of 600,000 RMB. Awardees are free to use funds as they see fit.

5. Where can applicants find more information about The Prize?

Please visit The Prize’s official website (<https://xplorerprize.org/>) or WeChat account (“新基石科学基金会”) for additional information, including the Application Guideline and news updates.