Longevity Impetus Grants: Program Summary

Overview

Impetus Grants is a 501c3 nonprofit grant program to accelerate longevity research, enabling new treatments targeting aging biology to prevent or reverse diseases and physical & cognitive decline. Grants are very fast (<3wk review), efficient (~1% program overhead), and focused on work that may be high risk but would change paradigms if true. Since 2021, it has deployed ~$34M across 146 projects, leading to >240 papers, five clinical trials, and dozens of new aging labs. Started and led by Martin Borch Jensen, who since 2010 has pushed longevity progress in academia (h-index 19, >$1M in grants), as founder & CSO of Gordian Biotechnology, and as advisor to multiple foundations.

Approach

Ambitious science. We fund work that could change the trajectory of the field, not incremental additions to existing knowledge. We've structured our review process to find high-risk, high-reward ideas. For example, individual reviewers can champion projects without needing committee consensus, where bold ideas often get filtered.

Leveraged impact. We focus on funding work that wouldn't happen otherwise. Some of the most exciting areas in longevity science today, including partial cellular reprogramming and epigenetic clocks, were pioneered without government funding because they were too speculative. Impetus operates in that gap, supporting work that's too risky for NIH and too early for company formation. We also support exceptional scientists to focus on aging, who would have struggled to get funding in a new field.

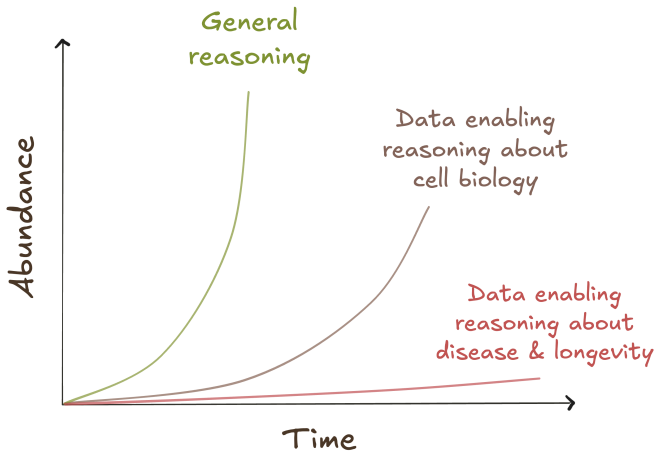
Current focus

The biggest impact opportunity today is accelerating the datasets that AI will need to reason about disease trajectories, causality, and treatments. There's great potential, but realizing it will depend on the availability of relevant data for reasoning about disease.

AlphaFold accelerated progress in protein folding thanks to strong ground truth data from crystallography. The equivalent data for curing disease is not molecular, but

Copyright © 2026 Norn Group Inc.

measurements of the behavior of organs and organisms over time. This data layer involves incompressible biological time, so we can't start later and catch up. We build datacenters now to meet anticipated compute demand. The same logic applies to data.



Most research grants still assume that the next five years will be roughly like the last five, but the pace of progress in AI makes this very unlikely. There's a timely opportunity for grantmaking that understands both this development, knows what the most important questions and required datasets in longevity are, and can act fast.

Opportunity

Impetus Grants is well positioned by having proven infrastructure for rapid grantmaking, and an emphasis on identifying the dynamics and bottlenecks for progress on longevity. Projects can be sourced, reviewed, and awarded within three months of patron commitments. We are now fundraising to deploy $15M+ to accelerate AI's impact on health. Every ~$300K funds one critical dataset for AI to learn physiology. First $5M are matched 1:1 by Robert Rosenkranz. Contact us to become a patron: martin@norn.group.

Track record

Unmatched speed

Impetus was conceptualized in June 2021, and the fundraise, program infrastructure, and reviewers were ready for launch that September. ~99% of awards were made 3 weeks from applying, versus 43 weeks average for NIA grants, making key data available sooner.

Copyright © 2026 Norn Group Inc.

Unmatched efficiency

Across the three rounds, operational overhead has been ~1.1%, lower than any funder we're aware of. Overhead at recipient institutions is capped at 10%. Between extensive familiarity with the field's researchers, open questions, and dead ends, and seeing an expected 1000+ applications in the round, we can allocate funding to the highest impact, non-duplicative projects.

Outsized impact

Past rounds focused on progress towards understanding and treating aging, and have been successful by any metric: 146 grantees produced >240 papers, preprints, and dissertations, with ~10% of the published papers in Nature/Science/Cell, as well as 2 new companies, a new Gordon Research Conference series, clinical classifications for senescence, 5 clinical trials, and more. Example outcomes include:

- Some of the first careful assessment of whether blood-based aging biomarkers are ready to predict and/or be used to test new therapies [1, 2, 3, 4, 5].

- A clinical trial on rapamycin for slowing ovarian aging, VIBRANT, that's now expanding to a larger follow-up based on initial data.

- Identifying DNA protective genes in long-lived whales and showing functional transfer across organisms.

- Making *C. elegans* live more than a year, a >20x increase and >2x longer than previous records.

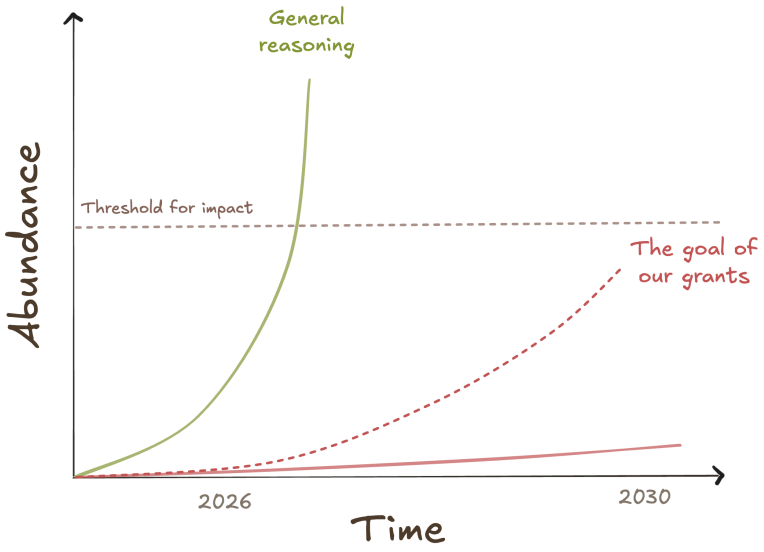
- Detailed lifelong maps of changes in ovaries, the disappearing thymus, and other organs.

- Identifying genetic drivers of vulnerability to neurodegeneration and chronic EBV infections.

It also appears that we are funding work that is missed by traditional funding. On peer-reviewed papers by Impetus awardees, ~84% of awardees did not acknowledge NIA support, and ~60% no authors did so. Given that these projects produced novel discoveries, the factors that prevented their funding must have been misdiagnosed.

Copyright © 2026 Norn Group Inc.

Finally, based on an unbiased LLM ranking of top 100 impactful papers in aging since 2022 (separate file), Impetus awards were represented 100x higher than the National Institute on Aging when adjusted for total budget, and more enriched than any other aging funder. ~Half of the Impetus-supported papers in this list did not have NIA funding (and >half of all papers we funded), suggesting we identify new work. We consider these indicative heuristics rather than an absolute measure of impact, but a positive indicator that isn't confounded by our biases.



Copyright © 2026 Norn Group Inc.