Keck seeks to fund those applications that enable whole new areas of research that have not yet been investigated. They are looking for work that is ground breaking and paradigm shifting (revolutionary rather than evolutionary). Keck looks to fund the work that is considered too risky or highly premature for other funding agencies.

Concept papers should be no more than one page, single-spaced, using 12-point font and 1-inch margins, inclusive of illustrations and references. Papers longer than one page will not be read by the Keck Foundation; illustrations are discouraged at this stage of the application process. Each concept paper should include:

- An overview of the proposed project emphasizing any unique aspects and pilot studies (indicate the area of emphasis – Medical Research or Science and Engineering Research), big idea or research to be conducted or technology to be created. (2-3 sentences)
- A description of the methodologies.
- Describe why Keck funding is necessary. Merely stating that NIH or NSF will not likely fund your work is not convincing.
- Key personnel on the project (1 sentence per person). It is strongly suggested that a strong research team outside of your lab be part of the application.
- Estimated budget by major areas, e.g., personnel, equipment, consumable supplies, etc. (Budgets can be a rough approximation at this point.)

Note: Keck does not consider resubmissions on the same topic, even if there are additional data that strengthen the resubmission.

Concept Paper Suggestions

Be sure to state the major goals of the proposed research project in a few sentences. Provide sufficient detail of the methodologies to be used in achieving the goals – this should be the majority of the one page summary. Describe the problems that need to be solved to achieve these goals.

Keck is looking to fund areas of research at the forefront of science, engineering and medicine, or that have the potential to lead to breakthrough technologies in these areas. Think about work that has the potential to alter the course of a field and clearly describe this new potential. Extensions of currently funded work are not considered viable for a Keck award.

The Keck Foundation will want to know why Keck is an appropriate funder of this project. They are unwilling to fund work that could readily be funded elsewhere, e.g. NIH, NSF, DOE. They are willing, however, to fund high-risk, early-stage work that the government might not yet be willing to fund. Evidence that the work is premature or too high risk by NIH, NSF, etc., is a key deciding factor by Keck in supporting the application. Keck is really looking for applications that have had previous review by NIH or other agencies and have been described as too risky or not in line with the particular federal sponsor.

Keck is willing to fund equipment and sometimes even core facilities, but the funding is always related to enabling new, novel and high risk innovation research. Your request should focus on the research question behind the equipment need and not seem merely to be an equipment request. That is, focus on the “grand challenge” you are seeking to solve and how you will do it, not on the technology or tool per se.

Note: Keck does not fund:

1) Clinical research. If your application is clinical in approach or the novelty of the enabling research questions are highly clinical, it will not be considered. Keck will not fund work that could be considered “personalized medicine.”

2) Drug development and drug discovery. While not listed in their WEB material, Keck has informed us that it will not consider this type of research, regardless of novelty and innovation.

3) NIH R01 (or similar proposals to other sponsors) types of research. If your proposal is more like a strong but conventional R01 application, it will not be considered by Keck.