

PRESS RELEASE
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The Digital Brain Project: Rothschild Hospital Foundation announces inaugural research cohort and program expansion to model the human brain

In partnership with the Université de Montréal and Meta, Rothschild Hospital Foundation is coordinating an open and collaborative science research infrastructure dedicated to the open and reproducible modeling of the human brain.

How the human brain learns, reasons, plans and acts remains one of the greatest scientific challenges of our time. Discovering these principles is the fastest path to AI models that can transform how we understand and treat neurological diseases.

The research community answered that challenge with extraordinary enthusiasm: from 58 international applications, we are proud to announce the nine teams of our inaugural cohort of the [Digital Brain Project](#). Fueled by this momentum, we are expanding this project with an additional \$10M in funding – **scaling the project to \$15M total** – to further accelerate open science by collecting and openly sharing neural data, develop foundational AI models of the human brain, and fast-track advances in neural disease diagnosis and treatment.

A major academic and scientific challenge

New computational approaches have enabled major breakthroughs in our understanding of the human brain. Neural information decoding is now possible: by recording brain activity, we can reconstruct images seen by a subject.

More recently, the inverse problem has emerged — creating a neural encoding model, i.e., predicting the brain activity of a human being under given conditions. In other words: generating a digital twin of the human brain.

If an image is "shown" to this digital brain, it should activate in the same way as a human brain. Achieving this level of modeling represents a major goal for neuroscience – enabling research without human subjects to fast-track scientific discovery of human intelligence principles and accelerate neural healthcare. But, it has remained a persistent challenge in neuroscience due to data bottlenecks — overcoming this is precisely what the Digital Brain Project addresses.

A collaborative project on a global scale

Coordinated by the Rothschild Hospital Foundation (HFAR), funded by Meta, and in partnership with the Université de Montréal, the [Digital Brain Project](#) is a collaborative

research program which aims to establish the largest repository of human brain activity data ever collected using naturalistic stimuli. This data will help train an open-source human brain foundational model accessible to the entire international academic and scientific community.

We are proud to welcome the first cohort of the Digital Brain project: nine academic research groups from around the world have been selected to participate in data collection. Each selected team will receive funding of \$500,000 .

We believe that we can only achieve our goals through an open, collaborative approach. By collecting, sharing, and open-sourcing data through a coordinated international effort, we believe we can advance our understanding of the human brain and achieve our scientific and clinical goals.

HFAR ensures the global coordination of the project: financial management, legal and ethical frameworks, cross-site standardization, and data privacy and governance. This central position reflects the institution's commitment to rigorous, high-quality research and its capacity to bring together world-class scientific teams.

An unprecedented methodological approach

Participating teams will record the brain activity of participants while they perform complex cognitive tasks — interactive games, problem-solving, decision-making — inside high-precision brain scanners (such as magnetoencephalography or high field MRI). This methodological choice is deliberate: games make it possible to simultaneously engage the brain's visual, linguistic, motor, and decision-making functions, combining perception and production in conditions that are far richer than traditional experimental protocols.

The objective is to collect and standardize brain recordings, split between acquisition sessions in natural conditions and controlled assessments on cognitive and reasoning tasks. All data will be structured according to strict protocols for cross-site harmonization, anonymization, subject protections, and quality control, guaranteeing international reproducibility and comparability of results.

Major scientific and medical impacts

The data produced will feed into a human brain foundation model trained on real neural activity from human beings in situations of active thinking. The expected benefits are structured around two axes:

- **For fundamental neuroscience research:** The project will enable unprecedented experimentation. By aligning computational models with real brain data, it will become possible to predict brain responses to new stimuli without requiring new physical examinations. The creation of a repository of this scale will also open up new perspectives for the detailed mapping of multisensory integration and the understanding of complex cognitive mechanisms.
- **For medicine:** Modeling the healthy human brain constitutes an indispensable foundation for the neurology and psychiatry of tomorrow. This work paves the way for the creation of digital twins, enabling the development of precision medicine. Furthermore, the ability to encode neural information is an essential prerequisite for the development of brain-computer interfaces, which are set to play a growing role in the field of neurosurgery.

An international scientific governance

The project is steered by an Executive Committee bringing together representatives from HFAR, the Université de Montréal, and Meta, and is supervised by an independent Scientific Committee composed of world-class researchers:

- L. Bellec — Université de Montréal
- A.-M. Kermarrec — EPFL
- L. Melloni — Max Planck Institute / NYU
- A. Mensch — Mistral AI
- R. Poldrack — Stanford University
- J.-A. Sahel — University of Pittsburgh

This committee is responsible for selecting the winning teams, ensuring the scientific rigor of the evaluation process, and supporting the execution of the project throughout its duration.

A strong commitment to open science

As a core principle of the project, the entire anonymized dataset will be made publicly available in accordance with our open science commitment, for the benefit of the global scientific community. The same will apply to the models built from this data. Participating teams will co-author joint scientific publications, thereby strengthening the links between neuroscience and medicine. All processing pipelines will be made available in open source, ensuring the transparency and reproducibility of the analysis chains.

Call for projects: Review and Selection

In our first phase, we led an international call for projects, open to academic and clinical research teams in neuroscience, neuroimaging, and data science, which closed on May 15, 2026.

We had overwhelming interest: 58 applications were received from international teams of the highest caliber, demonstrating the scientific community's interest in this initiative. Each selected team will receive funding of up to \$500,000 to support the collection and formatting of human brain data, in strict compliance with ethical standards, personal data protection requirements, and cross-site harmonization protocols.

The selection of our inaugural cohort of teams took place in early June 2026.

The selected teams

Following the rigorous evaluation conducted by the international Scientific Committee, nine teams were selected to join the Digital Brain Project. They were chosen for the quality of their experimental protocol, the scientific relevance of their approach, and their capacity to produce and share anonymized data.

The teams are:

- Daphne Bavelier / [Faculty of Psychology and Education Science, University of Geneva \(CH\)](#) / Switzerland
- Valentina Borghesani / [Faculty of Psychology and Education Science, University of Geneva \(CH\)](#) / Switzerland

- Sydney Cash / [Department of Neurology, Center for Neurotechnology and Neurorecovery, Massachusetts General Hospital / Harvard Medical School](#) / USA
- Jörn Diedrichsen / [Western Institute for Neuroscience, Department of Computer Science, and Department of Statistical and Actuarial Sciences, Western University, London, Ontario,](#) / Canada
- Anna Ivanova / [School of Psychological and Brain Sciences, Georgia Institute of Technology](#) / USA
- Nikolaus Kriegeskorte / [Department of Psychology, Department of Neuroscience & Department of Electrical Engineering \(affiliated member\), Columbia University](#) / USA
- Sam Nastase / [Department of Psychology, University of Southern California](#) / USA
- Christophe Pallier / Cognitive Neuroimaging Unit, Neurospin, INSERM-CEA / France
- Momchil Tomov / [Department of Psychology & Neuroscience, Boston College](#) / USA
- Pierre Bourdillon / Translational Innovations and Technologies in Artificial Intelligence and Neuroscience, Université Paris Cité / France) is the tenth laboratory participating in the project

Together, these teams will contribute to establishing a repository of standardized and open neural data — essential infrastructure for the advancement of cognitive neuroscience research and the development of tomorrow's neurological and psychiatric medicine.

"Understanding how the human brain perceives, decides, and acts remains one of science's most complex challenges. The Digital Brain Project tackles this challenge with a strong ambition: to produce, on an international scale, the data that will make it possible to model the human brain in real-world situations — and thus open up considerable perspectives for both fundamental research and clinical practice, from digital brain twins to brain-computer interfaces. For a hospital like ours, specialized in neurology and neurosurgery, coordinating this project is a major scientific responsibility."

— Pierre Bourdillon, Neurosurgeon and neuroscientist, Member of the Executive Committee of the Digital Brain Project — Rothschild Hospital Foundation

Future

On the heels of this success, we are pleased to announce that we are now expanding this grant with \$10M in additional funding to expand our efforts. We're excited to engage the community in our efforts. More details on this program and how to get involved will follow soon.

Learn more about the project: www.digitalbrainproject.org

About Rothschild Hospital Foundation

Rothschild Hospital Foundation is a leading private non-profit hospital, specializing in ophthalmology, neurology, neurosurgery, and oncology. Committed to translational research and health innovation, it coordinates the Digital Brain Project as the lead institution, ensuring the scientific, ethical, and operational governance of this international program.

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