

What kind of research is MAPS interested in funding?

Dear MAPS,

I am trying to get a handle on the big picture of how one goes about performing research with psychedelics. I have numerous lines of research that I want to pursue, beginning with some very basic research to examine baseline shifts in performance on perceptual/attentional/cognitive tasks, on up to standard experimental paradigms with the ultimate goal to implement these with MRI further down the road.

At the moment, however, I do not know how to begin step one since the certainty of my geographical location expires in two months. I assume that we would want research done in a university lab somewhere, rather than a closet-turned-lab in my own home? This relates to the issue of professional versus amateur. Certainly I can take all of the programs running on a computer here in the lab and they will run just as well on a computer in my home—there is no difference, but if that would not be considered acceptable, then I need to focus my energy towards finding a lab that will go for this.

So, my questions are: what kind of research (professional versus amateur) is MAPS interested in funding? What labs in Europe and the United States should I contact about research ideas? And what is the procedure for applying for MAPS funding for research? As much as I'd love to spend the rest of my life on a beach on a tropical island, I feel I know too much to not use what I know to further this cause. •

Mark Olson

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Dear Mark,

Great questions. *What kind of research (professional versus amateur) is MAPS interested in funding?*

We don't really make a distinction between professional v. amateur but instead focus on rigorous v. lax.

MAPS' priorities are:

1) Research that focuses on a therapeutic use of a psychedelic or marijuana, because this is the most accepted and quickest route, in my opinion, to some limited form of legal access to these drugs. For example, Dr. Charles Grob's proposed study on the use of MDMA in the treatment of pain and distress in cancer patients: MAPS has obtained a grant of \$58,000 for this study from the Barnhart Foundation. Also, the research of Evgeny Krupitsky, Ph.D. into the use of ketamine in the treatment of heroin addiction: MAPS budgeted \$24,000 for this study and Heffter budgeted \$15,000. Also, Dr. Donald Abrams' study of the use of smoked marijuana in HIV patients, which just received a NIDA grant in the amount of \$978,000 after MAPS donated \$10,000 to Dr. Abrams for his team's expenses in preparing two NIH grant applications.

2) Research that asks interesting scientific questions about the

psychological, cognitive, non-physiological aspects of psychedelics or marijuana, because this helps to legitimize the study of the interaction between these drugs and consciousness. For example, the study by Benny Shanon, Ph.D. into the impact of ayahuasca on cognitive processing, for which MAPS budgeted \$5,000.

3) Research into the physiological consequences of these drugs, since this helps open the door to more involvement with these drugs from the scientific community. For example, ayahuasca pharmacokinetics, conducted by J.C. Callaway, Ph.D. in Dr. Deborah Mash's lab (University of Miami) to which MAPS donated \$5,000. MAPS also donated \$35,000 for research into MDMA neurotoxicity in rats. However, when this research is completed, MAPS hopes that no additional animal studies will be necessary.

4) Research into the risks and benefits of the non-medical use of these drugs. For example, the follow-up study to Dr. Oscar Janiger's LSD research from 1954-1962, which was a naturalistic study. MAPS has already donated about \$15,000 to this study, with about \$10,000 or so to go.

5) Research into the use of psychedelics in other cultures. For example, studies with ayahuasca to which MAPS will soon donate \$2,000, and studies of the use of Peyote (see pages 3-5).

6) Educational efforts. For example, the Sandoz bibliography project which is in the process of classifying and putting abstracts online for all published papers about LSD and psilocybin. MAPS is budgeting about \$5,000 for this project.

7) Other interesting projects.

The key here is that MAPS has limited resources and so focuses primarily on funding pilot studies that can be used as part of larger grant applications to more traditional sources of funding. Since traditional sources of funding are reluctant to get involved, MAPS will fund larger studies as well, if resources allow.

What labs in Europe and the United States should I contact about research ideas?

In Europe, the main lab doing research with psychedelics is directed by Dr. Franz Vollenweider, vollen@bli.unizh.ch (or contact Alex Gamma, gamma@bblisun1.unizh.ch). In the United States, you can try Dr. Charles Grob, GROB@afp76.humc.edu, and Dr. Reese Jones, reese@itsa.ucsf.edu.

In Israel, for cognitive psychology, try Benny Shanon at msshannon@pluto.mscc.huji.ac.il. Dr. Shanon conducts all his ayahuasca research in Brazil but would be a helpful consultant.

What is the procedure for applying for MAPS funding for research?

We pride ourselves on having the fastest, easiest grant review process. Just let me know your idea via a few paragraphs on e-mail, then we talk it over on the phone and I tell you right then or within a few days if MAPS is interested in exploring the matter further. Then we work on a protocol and a budget, perhaps getting it reviewed by some other experts. Then we make a commitment pending approval, perhaps giving a small grant for trying to get approval.

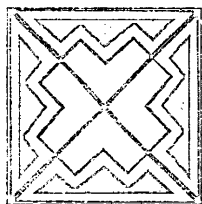
Then the approval process begins. You need to get FDA approval to administer any Schedule I drug, and approval from an Institutional Review Board (IRB) either affiliated with a hospital

or university, or independent.

Basically, MAPS would be interested in supporting some sort of study that you would be interested in conducting involving baseline shifts in performance on perceptual/attentional/cognitive tasks, or MRI studies (though cost starts to become a factor here). I can suggest that you contact Jon Frederick, smiile@utkux.utcc.utk.edu, the administrator of MAPS-forum, who is also interested in such a studies. It will not be easy to get permission for it, but MAPS would definitely like to help open up this field of inquiry. More specifically, MAPS can relatively easily allocate a grant of \$5,000 for a specific project. A grant of \$10,000 would take a bit more thought, and would need to be clearly linked to how the research would develop, and to plans to submit the data to other funders for continuation of this line of research. Grants in excess of \$10,000 are possible but I would probably want to shop the protocol around to potential funders so as to try to bring in contributions specifically for the project.

That's about enough for now. If you have any other questions, just ask. MAPS would like to help you get started on some research project. MAPS is also planning to include a new section on its web page that will list projects related to psychedelic research that are in need of funding. •

Rick Doblin
MAPS President
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From Sweden

I wanted to do something about psychedelic drugs and their effects, but without breaking the law. As I couldn't find any study in Swedish about what kinds of experiences people have had, in Spring 1997 I decided to do one. All I could find in Swedish was about "crisis," "psychosis" and harmful effects. My original paper in Swedish is 50 pages. Here is a short summary in English.

Summary

Psychedelic Drugs—A study of drug-induced experiences related to Stanislav Grof's model of the human unconscious

Psychedelic drugs provide a lot of puzzling experiences. LSD-assisted psychotherapy has been evaluated by Stanislav Grof and he also proposes a new expanded model of the human unconscious. The purpose of this study was to provide information about experiences obtained by illegal drug users and evaluate if these are consistent with Grof's descriptions. Fifteen anonymous drug users answered a questionnaire about use, experiences, circumstances and influences of their life. It included detailed questions about out-of-body experiences, telepathy, identification with other people or animals, seeing unknown buildings and landscapes, contact with "extra terrestrial creatures," bliss, fear, ego-loss and so on. I also had question about if they believed in "some kind of God" and "some kind of life after death" and if these beliefs had changed after they used psychedelics.

All of them had some experiences similar to Grof's descriptions. Transpersonal experiences were reported more often by the "heavy" users. Such experiences were also more likely to be reported by those who have practiced some other consciousness-expanding technique (like meditation), by those who described themselves as spiritual seekers and by those who make some form of ritual or mental preparation part of their experience. More users reported positive than negative effects regarding social relations with their families and general quality of life and also about their attitudes towards death. This study could be a basis for an expanded study, which could serve as a starting point for a discussion about therapeutic potentials of these substances.

This study also provides general information about Grof's model, the history of LSD and also some about psychedelic research worldwide.

Many people at my university have found my study and the results interesting. None had ever heard that psychedelics have therapeutic potential. Now I'm trying to get ideas for a new study for next year, probably something with floating-tanks. I would appreciate all kinds of ideas and suggestions for this, and also for contact with others with serious interest in related research. Not many people here are interested in such questions, so I really appreciate MAPS. •

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