

# Innovative Models to Expedite Research Funding

## Rapid Response Innovation Awards



Brian Fiske, PhD

Co-Chief Scientific Officer

---

The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research



THE MICHAEL J. FOX FOUNDATION  
FOR PARKINSON'S RESEARCH

# Here. Until Parkinson's Isn't.

- Launched in **2000** by actor Michael J. Fox
- Global strategic funder and facilitator: more than **\$1.5 billion** deployed to Parkinson's disease research and drug development
- Vision seeks a **world without Parkinson's disease** (so we can close our doors and go home)
- Mission execution through a **strategic research vision** centered on enabling progress in disease understanding, measurement and treatment
- Accelerating cures by **connecting community**: people with Parkinson's, care providers, researchers, industry, regulators, payers, policy-makers, strategic partners and other visionary philanthropists

# Our Challenge (in 2007)

- MJFF had established a robust set of funding programs and infrastructure for grant-making
- We were supporting important work but felt traditional programs may be missing higher risk, innovative ideas
- We were efficient, but traditional funding programs still took several months to find and fund promising ideas



# Rapid Response Innovation Awards (RRIA)

A faster but riskier alternative to traditional funding programs launched to foster real-time thinking



## What We Wanted

- Innovative (“crazy”) ideas
- All stages (basic to clinical)
- Limited preliminary data needed
- Fast funding decisions



## Who Was Eligible

- Anyone at non/for-profit
- International allowed
- Post-docs could apply with an ‘administrative’ Principal Investigator



## What We Provided

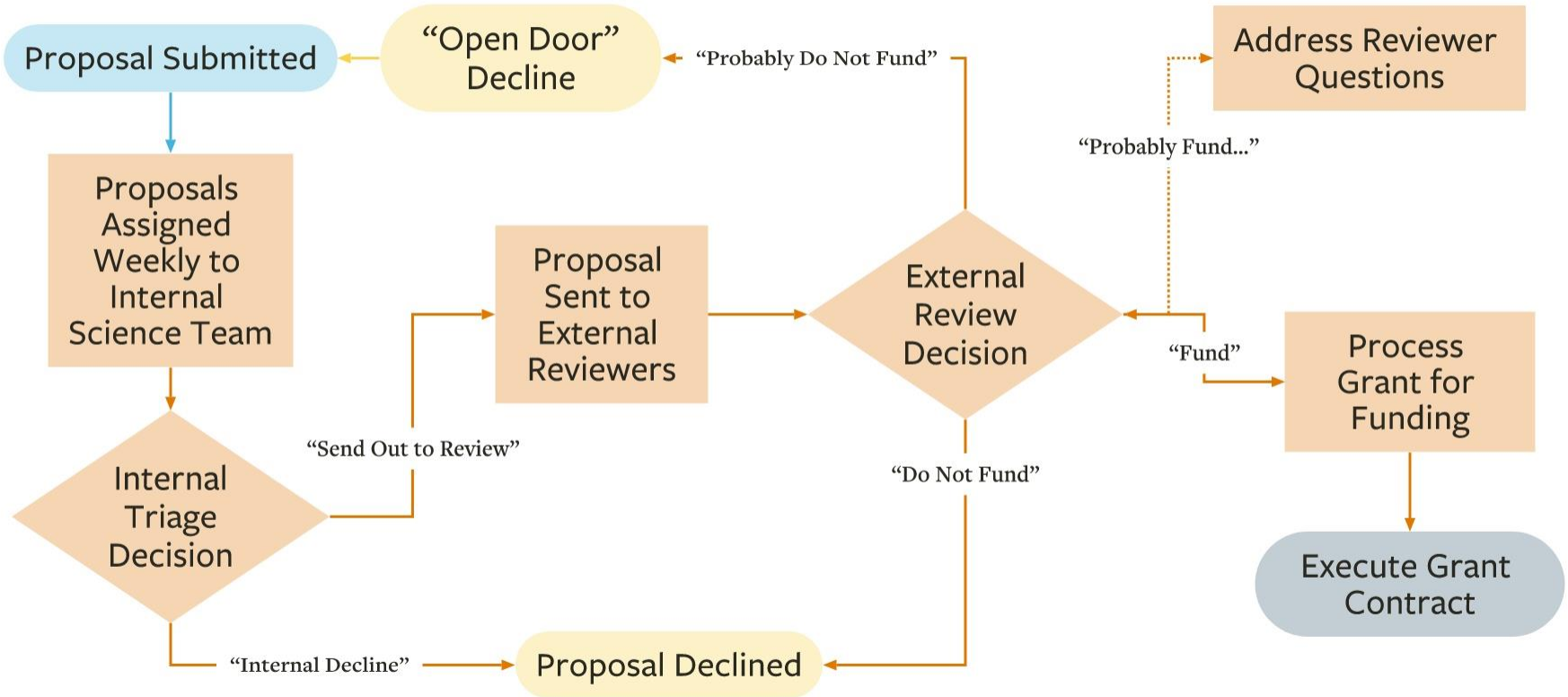
- 1 Year “pilot” of \$75,000
- Opportunity for supplement if results looked promising



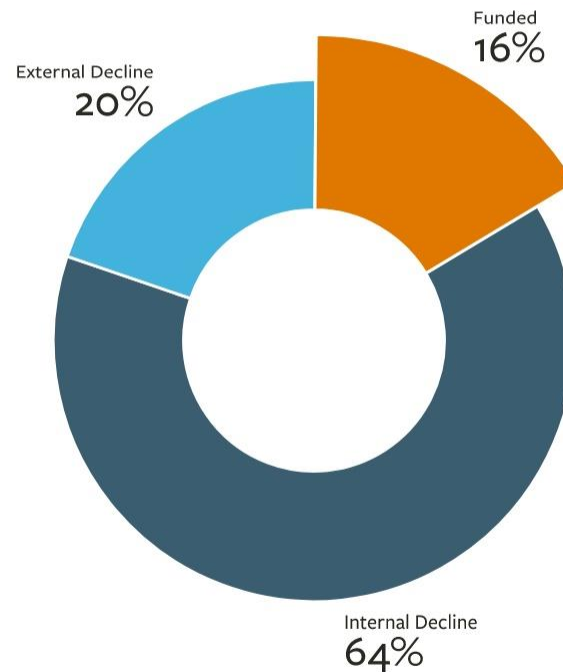
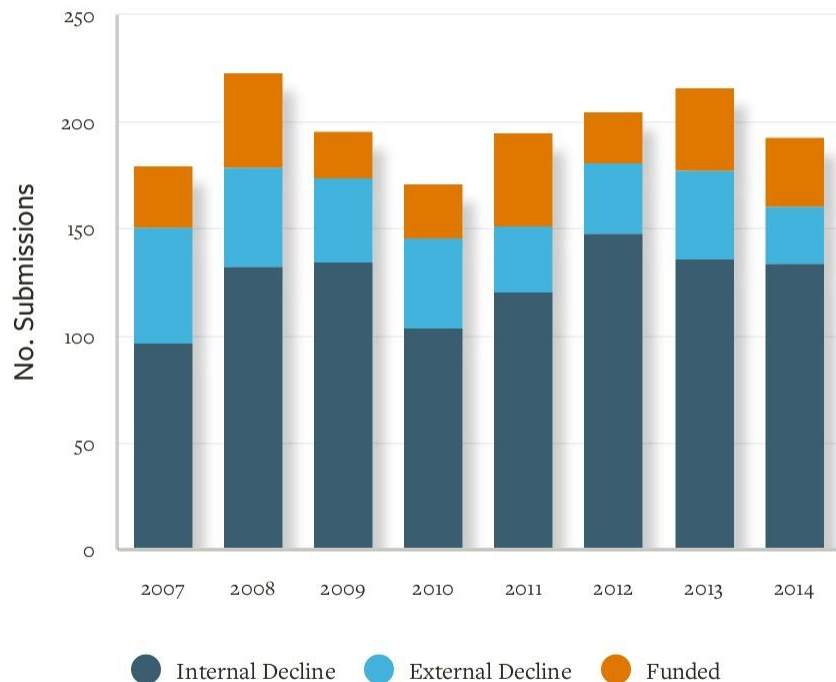
## What Was Required

- Short proposal
- Rolling Submission (no deadline)

# RRIA workflow was built for speed and flexibility



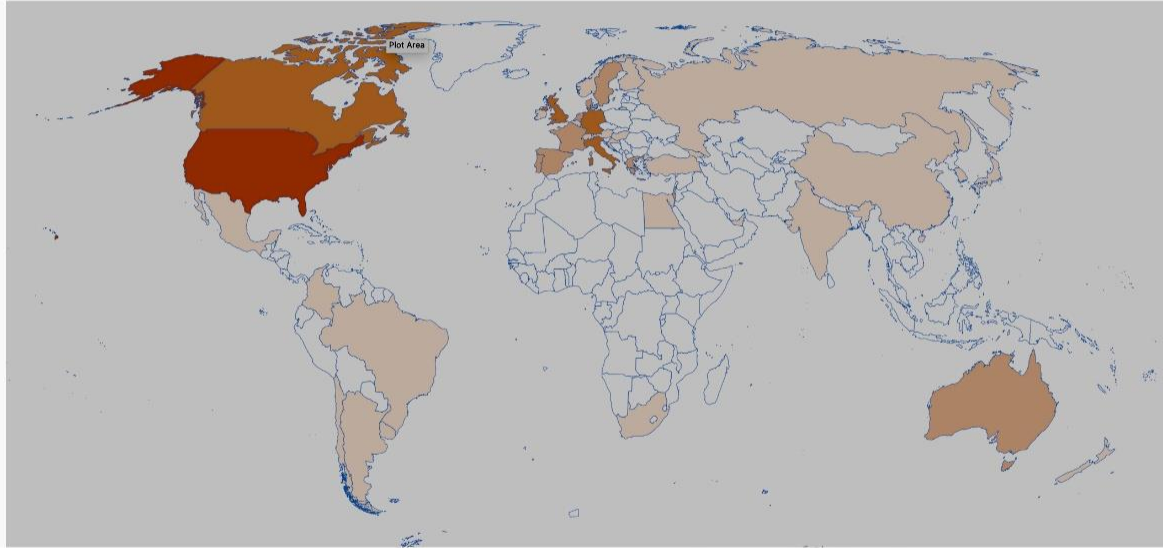
# RRIA Submissions 2007-2014



from preliminary analysis of n = 1579 submissions; does not represent all submissions (e.g., some submissions not included if were administratively rejected or incomplete)

# Applicants were global(ish)

But vast majority of submissions came from investigators in the U.S. (>60%), U.K, Canada and Europe



Applicant submissions from under-represented countries were too few to make an analysis of fund rate success by country/region meaningful but is something we are exploring more broadly in our current programs

# RRIA incentivized variety of applicant submissions



First Time PD



First Time MJFF

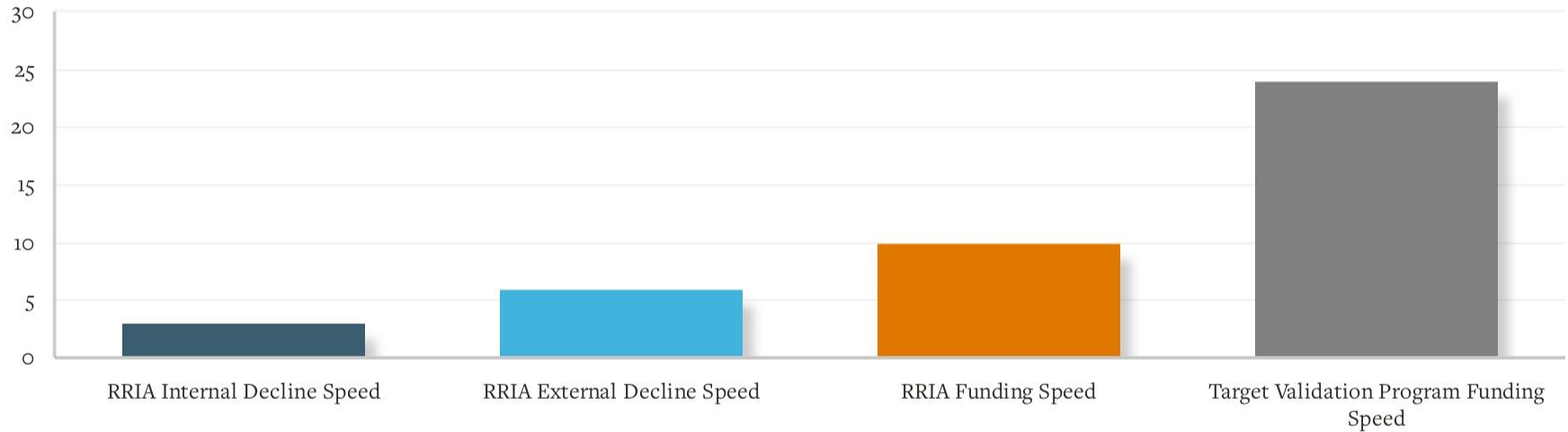


Industry Applicants



# How Fast Were We?

Median Weeks to Decision



With a 58% reduction in time to funding commitment vs a traditional grant program run over same period (e.g., Target Validation Program) we were clearly meeting our speed goal!

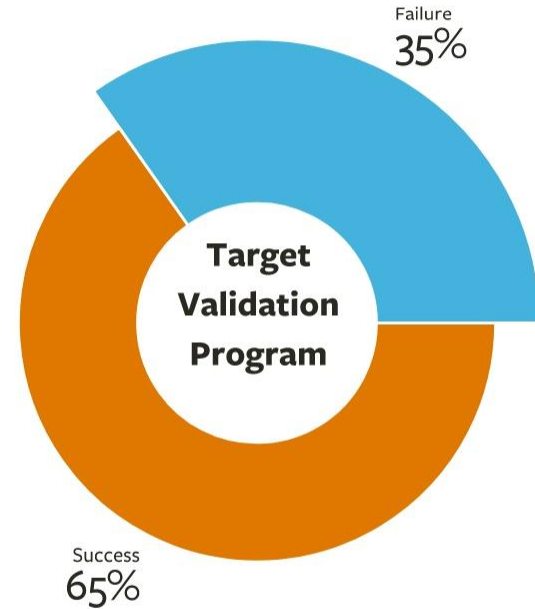
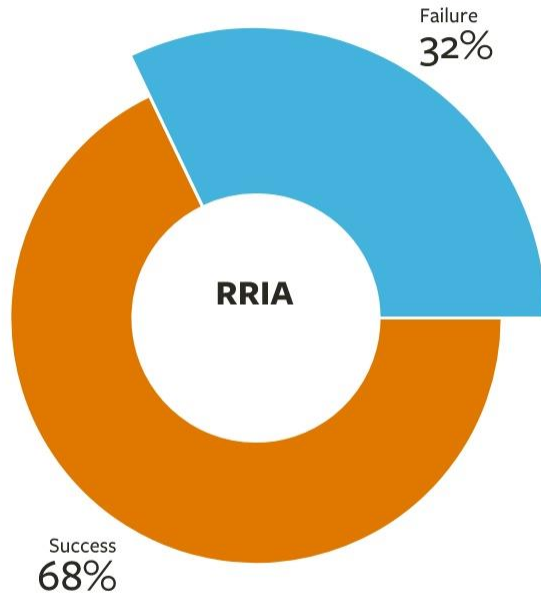
Note: Funding Speed is calculated off date when MJFF executes a grant; applicants are often told days to weeks before that time

# What We Sacrificed for Speed

- Limited review feedback offered to applicants unless there was interest in a re-submission
- Small funding meant limited scope of work realistically feasible: best for “pilot” studies
- Strategic dot-connecting across proposals and across other non-RRIA funding programs was limited

# How innovative (risky) were we?

Grant outcome\* may offer a measure of innovation and potential insight into program success



Using 'risk of failure' as our proxy for innovation revealed we were no better than our traditional funding programs

\*Data based on grant 'success scoring', a subjective assessment made by MJFF staff with input from external assessors

# Why we stopped RRIA

Researchers loved RRIA but MJFF felt that it was no longer supporting larger mission needs

- Program was not meeting innovation goal despite clear increase in decision-making speed
- Weekly review process was becoming burden to team who were often launching and supporting many other initiatives and programs in parallel
- Frequent overlap with projects funded (often at larger scale) through other funding programs
- An overall shift away from “catch all” programs to more strategically directed funding

**Rapid  
Response**



**Strategic  
Response**

**THANK YOU.**



Sabrina Franklin



Anna Dickstein