

NEUROSCIENCE & SOCIETY

Dana Foundation 2025 Impact Report



**Dana
Foundation**
Brain Science for a Better Future

NEUROTECH

JUSTICE SUMMIT

January 24, 2023 | 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. ET



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Caroline Montojo, Science and Technology in Society forum, Kyoto 2025



Karen Rommelfanger and Kafui Dzirasa, Neuroscience & Society Champion Award Winners



Steven E. Hyman, Dana Foundation 75th anniversary reception, June 2025

Advancing Neuroscience and Society

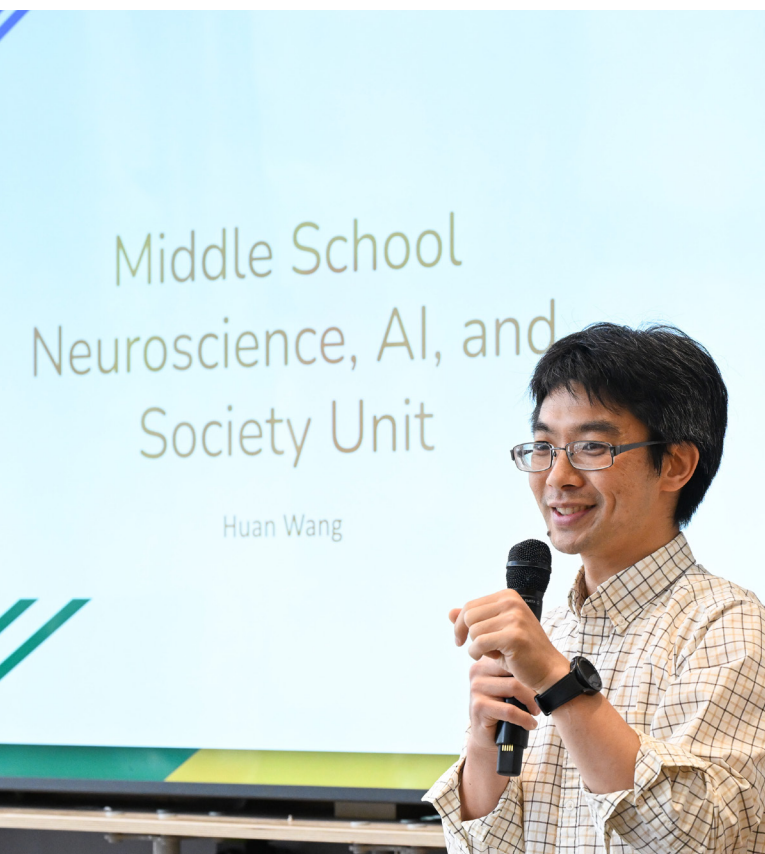
As the Dana Foundation celebrates its 75th anniversary this year, we reflect with gratitude on our legacy of supporting health and education—and on the path ahead as we continue to collectively and collaboratively shape the field of neuroscience.

Four years ago, we charted a new course, building on our long history in the field and our conviction that neuroscience holds profound potential to not only advance understanding of the brain, but also to serve the public good. The current renaissance in neuroscience discovery makes this work especially urgent: **Stronger connections are needed between brain research and the real-world needs, values, and experiences of people.** Ensuring that neuroscience serves society in meaningful and socially responsible ways requires a cultural shift, one that centers societal benefit as both a driver and an inspiration for science.

Our grantmaking, convening, and community-building efforts reflect this belief: Science does not exist in isolation, but in constant relationship with the people and communities it touches. Realizing the positive impact of science depends on strong connections across disciplines, between institutions and communities, and between science and society at large.

Since embracing this focus, the Dana Foundation has invested more than \$23 million in Neuroscience & Society grants, supporting 148 programs and initiatives.

In this Impact Report, we highlight the innovative work of our grantees and partners, advancing neuroscience that benefits society and reflects the aspirations of all people.



Teacher Institute for Neuroscience and Society Summit, July 2025

Brain Science for a Better Future

At the Dana Foundation, we envision a world where brain science fosters a brighter future for all people. It touches every aspect of our lives, whether we are living in good health or managing a brain condition. A [public survey](#) commissioned by the Dana Foundation in partnership with Research!America found that more than 8 in 10 Americans are affected by brain health issues, and that brain health is regarded as one of the most important health concerns today.

At the same time, most Americans report feeling underinformed about brain research, even as they express curiosity, hope, and cautious optimism about its future and a belief that they should guide this path forward as patients and informed individuals. This gap underscores both a responsibility and an opportunity: to strengthen education for the public about neuroscience and its relevance to daily life; to train the next generation of scholars and practitioners to address the societal implications of their work; and to invite the perspectives of patients and communities whose lived experiences should inform how neuroscience evolves to serve the public good.

We carry out our mission in that spirit—through education, training, and multi-directional public engagement in areas such as brain-computer interfaces and mental health. Meaningful collaborations across disciplines, institutions, and sectors between students and scholars, funders and policymakers, practitioners, and local communities are core to this work. Advancing neuroscience in ways that are socially responsible requires a broader view of science, one that acknowledges its deep interconnection with the people and communities it impacts. By setting research priorities in consideration of human perspectives and societal values, we can help build a human-centered paradigm for neuroscience.

Our mission is anchored in values that guide us to be bold, build trust, foster collaboration, lead with empathy, value diversity, and remain grounded. Throughout this report, you will see how these values come to life in the work of our grantees and partners, including:

- **Seeding new pathways:** Since 2022, the Foundation has launched pilot grants to strengthen education, training, and public engagement in neuroscience. These projects are flourishing in areas such as judicial education, undergraduate research training that integrates ethical and social considerations, and patient involvement in the development of implantable brain-computer interfaces.
- **Launching a flagship initiative:** In 2024, we introduced the Dana Center Initiative for Neuroscience & Society, a multi-million-dollar collaboration with leading universities, neuroscientists, and communities. Together, we are asking fundamental questions about where the field should go, how far it should go, and how neuroscience can best serve society.
- **Recognizing leadership:** In 2025, we established the [Neuroscience & Society Champion Awards](#), honoring neuroethicist **Karen S. Rommelfanger, Ph.D.**, and psychiatrist **Kafui Dzirasa, M.D., Ph.D.**, for their groundbreaking efforts to bridge neuroscience and society.



We are proud to work in partnership with a broad network committed to strengthening the role of science in society. These partners include philanthropic collaborators such as the Science Philanthropy Alliance, Doris Duke Foundation, Rita Allen Foundation, and The Kavli Foundation; international partners in Brain Awareness Week, including the International Brain Research Organization (IBRO), the Federation of European Neuroscience Societies (FENS), and the Society for Neuroscience; leading research institutions in the Dana Center Initiative, including the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science, Massachusetts General Brigham, and Loyola University Chicago; and federal agencies and alliances such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative and the BRAIN Initiative Alliance.

Taken together, these initiatives point to the emergence of a new paradigm for neuroscience: one in which scientific progress advances not only for discovery's sake, but in alignment with societal goals and community values.

As we mark the Foundation's 75th anniversary, we look forward to the years ahead—with a commitment to collaboration, community, and transformation in brain science for the public good.



Caroline Montojo, Ph.D.
President; Chief Executive Officer
Dana Foundation

Bringing Our Mission to Life

Every aspect of our work at the Dana Foundation is guided by our vision for the future of neuroscience, one where advancements both benefit society and reflect the aspirations of all people. We engage in this pursuit through our three program areas:

- **Dana Education** invests in education for all ages to create interest in and strengthen understanding of neuroscience and its connection to our daily lives.
- **Dana NextGen** supports the development of the next generation of scholars who will leverage their neuroscience knowledge to benefit society.
- **Dana Frontiers** invests in public engagement to foster opportunities for all people to shape neuroscience and benefit from its power and promise.

Collaboration is central to this work as our vision for neuroscience and society takes shape through these programs. Each supports a growing ecosystem of scientists, educators, ethicists, students, trainees, professionals, and community leaders who are working across boundaries to redefine how neuroscience is taught, practiced, and shared. This work relies on an intersectional approach that fully understands the potential impact of neuroscience on our lives and creates solutions that serve real-world needs.



Dana Foundation program directors: Kathleen Roina, Ishan Dasgupta, Devon Collins

Each individual grant from the Dana Foundation is an investment in this vision, which we pursue through learning and partnerships across our program areas to explore key questions we face today: What does ethics-infused neuroscience education look like? How do we ensure the responsible and equitable expansion of neurotechnologies? What is community-partnered neuroscience in practice?

Last year, we launched the Dana Center Initiative for Neuroscience & Society to answer these very questions and further this exploration. Our initial Dana Center Initiative grants are supporting:

- [Loyola University Chicago](#) to develop education opportunities for middle and high school students that encourage careers in neuroscience by developing students' STEM identity and demonstrating how neuroscience impacts their lives.
- [Massachusetts General Brigham](#) to connect leaders in neurotechnology with communities to meaningfully increase equitable access to and promote responsible use of neurotechnology.
- [UCLA and Charles R. Drew University](#) to act as an incubator for community-partnered neuroscience, developing new ways to collaborate beyond academia, train the next generation of scholars, and inform policy and decision-making in ways that genuinely partner with community members.

With our partners, we are creating a paradigm that will shape the future of neuroscience and identify where advancements in brain science can most benefit and enhance our lives and society at large.

The promise of this approach is further illustrated by the grantees featured throughout this report. Across all of our grants, we seek to fund work that reflects our mission and values-driven, interdisciplinary approach. We support projects that combine scientific rigor with ethical reflection, and we are energized by efforts that push these ideas and opportunities forward. This moment demands bold thinking. The programs highlighted in this report exemplify that belief in action and the communities helping to bring it to life.



Khara Ramos

Khara Ramos, Ph.D.

Vice President of Neuroscience & Society
Dana Foundation

Our Impact by the Numbers

Data from 2022-2025

148

Neuroscience
& Society Grants

\$23M+

in Neuroscience
& Society Funding

Brain Awareness Week

More than **\$775k awarded** through grants to IBRO and FENS in support of Brain Awareness Week activities connecting local communities to brain science through education and outreach. Launched in 1996, Brain Awareness Week is a longstanding Foundation initiative that we continue to support.

453
Grants

6
Continents

Dana Education

Supporting Education in Neuroscience and Society

The Dana Education program supports educational endeavors that engage people of all ages, sparking their interest in and strengthening their understanding of neuroscience and its connection to their daily lives. Projects aim to build lasting knowledge and inspire K-12 students to consider neuroscience as a future career pathway. Another emphasis within this program is education for professionals who use neuroscience in their work, supporting informed decision-making in their own respective fields.



Participants in the judicial education program cocreated by the Flaschner Judicial Institute and Center for Law, Brain and Behavior.

With grant support from the Dana Foundation, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Washington (UW), in partnership with UW's Department of Bioengineering, created the [Brain Health Learning Network](#) (BHLN). Through 13 expert-led public lectures, this program provided older adults with accessible, reliable information about neuroscientific research that increased awareness around neurological diseases, mental disorders, and brain health. Through participation in focus groups, the local community was an active partner in both the design and topic selection for the series. These topics included dementia and memory loss, sleep, Alzheimer's disease, nutrition, concussions, and how to discern reliable science.

The BHLN series was intentionally designed to more effectively inform older adults and to help them communicate about and manage their symptoms, discuss treatments with healthcare providers, critically analyze information about brain disorders, and form a deeper foundational understanding for themselves. It is intended to be a replicable model of how to reach an audience with scientific information they need and want. Data collected pre- and post-lecture from 297 participants across all sessions showed a meaningful increase in knowledge. Online recordings of the lectures have been viewed more than 6,612 times across all topics.

"You never know when a friend of yours or a relative is going to face one of these issues. Whether it be diets or medicines or chronic pain, I found something in [each lecture] that I could apply to my life."

- Brain Health Learning Network participant

"This program has given me so much more knowledge and understanding of the why and how, and I find myself thinking a great deal about the person in front of me."

– Participating Massachusetts state court judge upon completion of the judicial education program

In 2022, the Dana Foundation partnered with The Franklin Institute, a leading science education center in Philadelphia and one of the country's oldest museums, to update the **Franklin Institute's Neuroscience & Society Curriculum** for high school students. These updates created an online version, offering educators a flexible framework to teach high school students about neuroscience through the lens of everyday societal issues. This resource helps educators teach neuroscience in an approachable way and inspire students to pursue further study and exploration of the field of neuroscience.

The curriculum combines classroom activities and discussions, inquiry-based learning projects, and opportunities for students to analyze case studies and neuroscience in popular culture. Students explore topics like neuroanatomy and neurotransmission, drugs and addiction, education and development, law, and criminology, and well-being.

As a part of the curriculum development process, a Teacher Advisory Board—representing a range of teaching perspectives, neuroscience expertise, geographic regions and locales, and student communities—reviewed the content and format. The Teacher Advisory Board provided feedback to ensure the final product was aligned with classroom practice, feasible to implement, and accessible and relatable to a diversity of teachers and students.

The updated curriculum has had over 164,500 total views and 42,920 unique visitors. It is a free resource and is available to all teachers and students on the Franklin Institute's [website](#).

With support from the Dana Foundation, [the Flaschner Judicial Institute and the Center for Law, Brain and Behavior \(CLBB\)](#) cocreated and piloted a groundbreaking judicial education program for Massachusetts state court judges, focused on the effective and appropriate use of neuroscience in the courtroom and in the law.

As courts see an increasing number of cases involving neuroscientific evidence, this program responded to a growing need for judicial education in the field. Cocreated with Massachusetts state court judges, this program provides a practical model that equips judges with a stronger understanding of neuroscience, enabling them to more effectively evaluate expert testimony and scientific evidence in their decision-making.

The response from the Massachusetts judiciary exceeded expectations, with interest surpassing anticipated demand and resulting in the participation of 28 judges from six different court departments. The program spanned four in-person sessions, during which judges took part in hypothetical vignettes that grounded them in real-world practice and engaged in bidirectional learning with scientific and medical experts.

Results of pre- and post-program participant surveys show an increased understanding of core neuroscience concepts and increased confidence in applying these concepts to their work. For example, when asked at the beginning of the program if they understood how the brain develops from youth to adulthood and changes as humans age, only 28% of the respondents agreed. Upon completion of the program a resounding 100% of the respondents agreed, demonstrating how this program helped to address this gap in knowledge among judges. Judges reported finding the program rigorous yet engaging, and some described it as transformative. Many shared that they would adopt more individualized approaches and ask new questions in cases, underscoring the program's real-world impact in the courtroom. The overwhelmingly positive feedback affirms the program's success in meeting the need for high-quality neuroscience education to judges.

Dana NextGen

Creating a New Generation of Neuroscience and Society Scholars

The Dana NextGen program prepares the next generation of neuroscience and society scholars to think reflexively and responsibly apply neuroscience knowledge to benefit society by supporting innovative training opportunities, workforce development, and collaboration across disciplines. Projects go beyond traditional practices and focus on experiential learning, equipping trainees with resources, skills, and professional networks to address the complex problems raised by advances in neuroscience.



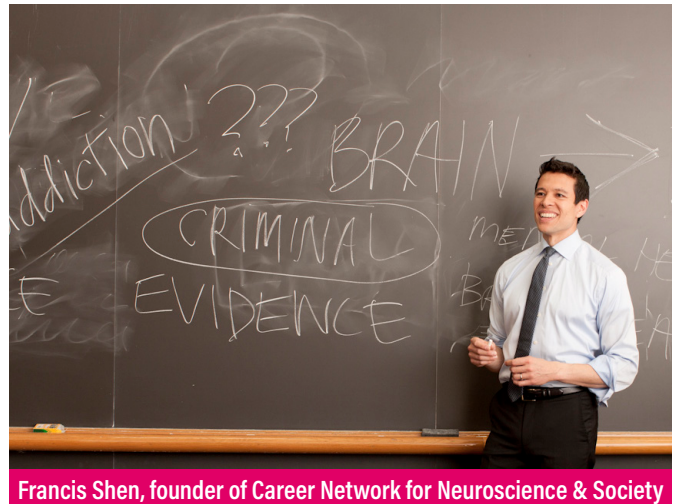
Leadership Alliance Scholars, 2025

Funding from the Dana NextGen program established the [Dana Foundation Neuroscience and Society Scholars](#) at Brown University, Johns Hopkins University, and the University of Pennsylvania. This Leadership Alliance program provides a summer intensive interdisciplinary research experience in neuroscience and society for cohorts of undergraduate students from racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and geographic backgrounds that are underrepresented in neuroscience.

The program has hosted 20 students so far. For many, it has already had a positive impact on their future research and career plans in ways they had not considered before engaging in the program.

"Programs like this show that even with my specific background and the opportunities I lack, there is still always a way to achieve your dreams."

- Dana Foundation Neuroscience and Society Scholar



Francis Shen, founder of Career Network for Neuroscience & Society

The [Career Network in Neuroscience & Society](#) is a resource for aspiring scholars and practitioners with interests that lie at the intersection of neuroscience and society. The Network serves as [a hub to learn more](#) about intersectional fields such as neuroethics, neurolaw, and neuroarchitecture; find relevant job postings; and connect with others interested in harnessing brain science to create a better future.

In addition to offering extensive resources, the Career Network regularly hosts virtual and in-person events. Its annual Neuroscience & Society Virtual Career Fair connects participants with leading experts, highlights emerging opportunities, and offers practical guidance for pursuing careers in these interdisciplinary fields. The Career Network has generated tremendous interest from its inception. Since its launch in 2023, the Career Fair has grown in scale and reach, evolving from its inaugural event with 39 panelists to feature 69 by 2025, engaging hundreds of attendees from more than two dozen countries each year.

The Career Network's active community continues to grow, including the Network's newsletter, which has over 6,000 subscribers.

Dana Frontiers

Increasing Public Engagement with Neuroscience and Society

The Dana Frontiers program increases collaborative engagement with diverse publics, supporting opportunities for all people to shape neuroscience and benefit from its power and promise. Projects build meaningful relationships between neuroscience practitioners, policymakers, and communities of people, including developing new tools and resources for trust-building and deep listening, supporting individual leaders in civic neuroscience, and providing opportunities for collaboration across sectors and identities.



iBCI-CC Annual Meeting group photo, 2025

The [Implantable Brain-Computer Interface Collaborative Community](#) (iBCI-CC), convenes people experiencing neurological injury or disease, researchers, clinicians, medical device companies, patient advocacy groups, ethicists, regulators, payers, federal agencies, and research support organizations to engage with one another's perspectives to drive action and policy. In this current pivotal moment for implantable brain-computer interfaces, where we are moving from the first-in-human and safety studies to larger studies and the initial availability of devices on the wider market, the industry faces challenges that cannot be solved by research alone. This collaboration represents a critical step toward creating an ecosystem that advances cutting-edge neurotechnology while ensuring its equitable distribution to those who stand to benefit the most.

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The iBCI-CC has made significant strides since their first charter meeting in January 2024, with 17 organizations signing on as founding members, including patient advocacy organizations. The iBCI-CC organizes their operations through seven work groups, each focused on specific topics like clinical outcome measures, ethics and data security, interoperability, user priorities, and public engagement.

The iBCI-CC has over 400 members and continues to grow.

“Community engagement is not just helping [neurotechnology] developers understand the medical process and how people interact with the healthcare system, whether they’re affluent, underprivileged, or living in rural areas. It’s also about understanding how they interact socially and within their communities—their norms, values, and beliefs.”

– Jennifer French, co-organizer of the Implantable BCI Collaborative Community

Dana Frontiers supports host institutions that sponsor **Civic Science Fellows** to develop and test civic science approaches, which bridge the gap between science and the communities it impacts, while participating in a dedicated network. The four Dana-supported Civic Science Fellows have each explored new pathways for improving research practices and fostering meaningful engagement with different institutions and communities to make neuroscience more inclusive and impactful:

[Kuranda Morgan](#) (UC Berkeley Center for the Science of Psychedelics) focused on democratizing how psychedelic research is conducted and applied. She has recently transitioned into a permanent role at the center as director of strategy, allowing her to carry forward the work she began during her fellowship. Her work aims to ensure that the benefits of psychedelic science reach diverse populations, particularly those that have been historically marginalized. Morgan sees tremendous potential in psychedelic science for mental health treatments, which requires careful, nuanced, and inclusive approaches.

[Leanna Kalinowski](#) (Neuromatch) examined how computational neuroscientists perceive and engage in civic science. She conducted a global survey to explore scientists’ civic science behaviors, attitudes, and motivations across career levels, research disciplines, and countries. With over 200 survey responses, Neuromatch plans to use Kalinowski’s findings to develop training programs for early-career researchers on targeted methods of civic science engagement. She also contributed to the Open Science initiative at Neuromatch by codesigning and delivering three pilot Open Science 101 training courses, which were attended by more than 400 researchers from more than 70 countries. This fellowship was sponsored by the Dana Foundation in partnership with The Kavli Foundation.

[Erin M. Purvis, Ph.D.](#), (University of California-Irvine Center for the Neurobiology of Learning and Memory) explored the ethical and societal implications of sleep neuroscience in partnership with the local Santa Ana community. She aims to create pathways for community voices to be included in the research process, ensuring science represents what each community needs.

[Claire Weichselbaum, Ph.D.](#), (National Informal STEM Education Network) focused on developing [tools for public engagement](#) with the ethical and societal impacts of neuroscience. She created three interactive card games, with input from scientists, ethicists, educators, and policy experts, that engage players in reflection and dialogue about neuroscience research and neurotechnology: Neuro Futures (inviting participants to prioritize a variety of future and emerging neurotechnologies), What Makes Us Human (encouraging people to consider which of our brain’s abilities are most uniquely human), and Neuro Futures Championship Game (facilitating discussion about the potential benefits of new and emerging neurotechnologies).

In the Field: Convening Collaboration

Advancing a human-centered paradigm for neuroscience requires more than grantmaking—it requires fostering meaningful connections and knowledge sharing among scholars, practitioners, communities, and decision-makers in funding and policy. As researchers and practitioners in neuroscience and society develop innovative models for education, training, and public engagement, it is essential that these evidence-based approaches reach those shaping the broader landscape of neuroscience.

The Dana Foundation regularly convenes leaders and changemakers to support this exchange and grow awareness of neuroscience and society work. Highlights from our convening efforts include:

- **Science, Ethics, and Policy in partnership with the Science Philanthropy Alliance:** Together with the Science Philanthropy Alliance, in 2024 the Dana Foundation brought together private foundation leaders, scholars, and practitioners from fields including artificial intelligence, climate science, and neuroscience. Participants explored the ethical and societal dimensions of emerging discoveries and technologies, fostering dialogue across disciplines.
- **United Nations General Assembly Science Summit:** In collaboration with the European Brain Council, the Dana Foundation hosts discussions on neuroscience and society. In 2024, the Foundation presented a panel on Applying Neuroscience in the Courtroom, examining how neuroscientific evidence is used in criminal and civil cases, and how it is shaping the future of law and justice. In 2025, the panel Community-Based Neuroscience Research: Strengthening Trust and Engagement explored inclusive, context-sensitive approaches to public engagement that promotes equitable, trustworthy, and effective science.
- **Building Grantee Communities:** The Foundation convenes its grantees to foster community, share findings, and strengthen collaboration. Notable gatherings include the annual DCI grantee meeting and the annual Dana Foundation Reception at the Society for Neuroscience conference, which connects mentors and mentees focused on advancing neuroscience for societal benefit.

Through these convenings, the Dana Foundation amplifies the impact of neuroscience research, promoting a culture in which scientific progress aligns with human values and societal needs.





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Dana Foundation

Brain Science for a Better Future

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