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## Pre-Doctoral Fellowship to Promote Diversity in Ataxia Research

### Introduction

The National Ataxia Foundation (NAF) is a patient-facing nonprofit organization established in 1957 to accelerate the development of treatments for ataxias, while working to improve the lives of those living with ataxia. This continues to be at the heart of the organization today. NAF is a world leader in the ataxia research field, using national and global collaboration to further research efforts. In its continuing efforts to find the causes, treatments, and cures for the ataxias, the NAF provides limited, short-term financial support of ataxia research through its annual Research Grant Program. This document includes NAF policies and guidelines relevant to the Pre-Doctoral Fellowship to Promote Diversity in Ataxia Research.

### Description

This URM Pre-doctoral research fellowship is a competitive, non-renewable, merit-based award intended to enhance research and/or clinical training of promising students who are matriculated in pre-doctoral or clinical health professional degree training programs and who intend careers as scientists, physician-scientists or other clinician-scientists aimed at continuing ataxia basic science, translational science, or clinical research towards the goal of serving individuals with ataxia.

This award provides partial support for study and research and may be used to support pre-doctoral students who are pursuing research with an ataxia-relevant theme. Proposals across the spectrum of basic, translational, and clinical research are welcome.

The pre-doctoral award is a two-year \$50,000 grant (\$25,000 per year). The second year of funding will be contingent on demonstration of progress by the awardee. A progress report is required 11 months after the start of the grant funding term. Instructions on what to include in the progress report will be detailed in the notice-of-award letter and will be submitted via email directly to [aimee@ataxia.org](mailto:aimee@ataxia.org).

**Funding Period:** 2 years, from March 1, 2024 to February 28, 2026. No-cost extensions (NCE) will be considered for extenuating circumstances and are subject to approval by NAF.

**Funding Amount:** \$50,000 (\$25,000 per year); Indirect costs are prohibited from being applied to NAF grants.

**Application Deadline:** October 24, 2023 by 11:59 PM ET

### Eligibility

*At the time of application, the applicant must:*

1. Be enrolled as a student in a post-baccalaureate Ph.D. or MD/Ph.D. program in the U.S.
2. Applicants must be U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals, and/or U.S. permanent residents; individuals granted deferred action status under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program; Indigenous individuals; individuals granted Temporary Protected Status; asylees; and refugees, regardless of race, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, or sexual orientation.

Reference: <https://www.fordfoundation.org/work/our-grants/>

3. Identify as one or more of the following:

- An individual from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups in the US: Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders
- An individual who identifies as LGBTQIA+
- Individuals with a disability

At the time of award activation, the candidate must have successfully completed their qualifying exams, or equivalent\*, in their respective programs and be able to devote effort to research or activities related to the development into an independent researcher or a related career aimed at improving lives of those living with ataxia through clinical care or research discoveries.

### **Mentor**

It is imperative that the fellow receives counsel and direction from at least one mentor who is an established investigator interested in the progress of the project and has demonstrated expertise in ataxia research and/or clinical care for those with ataxia.

A prospective fellow must have primary responsibility for the writing and the preparation of the Fellowship application, with the understanding that the mentor will play a significant part in providing guidance to the applicant. The mentor does not need to be affiliated with the university where the applicant is enrolled, but should be available for mentorship via email, video conferencing, etc.

If you need assistance connecting with a mentor who specializes in Ataxia, please contact the NAF at [research@ataxia.org](mailto:research@ataxia.org).

### **Guidelines**

1. A maximum of 50% of award can be applied to school tuition. The remaining amount of the award must be used to support the research project.
2. The NAF will retain the right to unilaterally cancel any awards for non-compliance or non-performance.
3. Awards are not transferable to other researchers, but subject to NAF approval, may be transferred to a new institution should the awardee change institutions.
4. All awardees must agree to ResearchFish Statement
5. The two-year funding term is negotiable based on your institution's academic calendar.

## **Grant Application Instructions**

### **Create proposalCENTRAL Account**

The NAF uses proposalCENTRAL online grant management system to facilitate the grant application and review process. All applicants must create an account prior to submitting a Letter of Intent. Use this weblink <https://proposalcentral.com> to create an account. Instructions to submit a letter of intent and the full application can be found on the **proposalCENTRAL** website.

### **Grant Application**

Using the proposalCENTRAL online portal, please submit the full application on or before October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

Complete applications will include the following attachments:

From Applicant:

- Personal Statement (Essay indicating your dedication to the ataxia disease space)
- Biosketch (example found at: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm>)
- Scientific Abstract
- Lay Summary
- Summary of Specific Aims (1 page maximum)
- Background and Significance (2 page maximum)
- Preliminary Studies (2 page maximum)
- Research Plan including requested dates of funding term (3 page maximum)
- Budget Details
- References
- Signed Signature Pages from the Institution
- Institutional banking instructions for domestic partners

From Mentor:

- Publication List
- Biosketch
- Letter of Recommendation from Mentor(s)

## **Review Dates**

Applications are reviewed between late December 2023 through early January 2024. Written notification of funded and non-funded proposals will be emailed to all applicants by the end of February 2024. *Please do not call or email NAF about the status of your grant.*

## **Review Process**

All applications are evaluated by a review committee, selected by NAF's Chief Scientific Officer. The review committee will score and prioritize all grants received by the deadline and make funding recommendations. The NAF Board of Directors will consider the recommendations and make the final approval and funding determinations.

Funding of awards is based on the availability of funds, the priority score assigned to each application, the relevance to ataxia, and innovation of the research project. Applications with high scores in relevance to ataxia and scientific merit will receive higher priority.

## **Disbursement of Funds**

Awards are for one year only. Checks or electronic transfers will be issued by March 31<sup>st</sup> and sent directly to the institution of the funded researcher named in the application. Electronic payment is preferred.

## **Change in Status of Awarded**

Awards are to remain solely with the designated awardee and may not be transferred to any other personnel. If a recipient decides to discontinue the project, the award will be terminated immediately and all pro-rated funds shall be returned to NAF. If an investigator changes institutions, the award may be transferred, contingent upon the successor institution's commitment to support the research for the full remaining term of the award. No-cost extensions (NCE) will be considered for extenuating circumstances and require approval from NAF's research director. Please submit requests for an NCE to [aimee@ataxia.org](mailto:aimee@ataxia.org).

## **Publications**

When a paper or poster is published or presented before a scientific organization by an awardee, based on the work supported by an NAF grant, an electronic copy of the paper or a description of the presentation should be sent to the National Ataxia Foundation. All papers, posters and press releases shall carry an

acknowledgement line to the National Ataxia Foundation. In addition, a copy of any press release regarding the study funded by NAF should also be e-mailed to NAF at [aimee@ataxia.org](mailto:aimee@ataxia.org).

## **Reports/Deliverables**

A progress report is required 11 months after the start of the funding term.

All awarded applicants are required to submit a report on key findings and deliverables resulting from the awarded project, as well as a full financial report detailing how grant award funds were utilized, using the ResearchFish online portal. Reports are due within 4 months of completion of the research project. Awardees will receive separate instructions on how to create and submit

Applicants must update their ResearchFish report once annually for up to 3 years following completion of the research project with any additional sources of funding, publications, patents, or other deliverables that can be attributed in part to the NAF award. The scientific report is reviewed by NAF staff and NAF's Medical Research Advisory Board but is not made public.

Because the National Ataxia Foundation takes seriously its responsibility to report to its members on the use of their research contributions, the layperson final summary submitted through ResearchFish will be published in the organization's newsletter and posted on NAF's website. The summary must be written in such a manner as to be understood by the average layperson and should not contain privileged or unpublished information.

## **NAF Communication Outlets**

The NAF reserves the right to publish the title of each funded grant, name of the principal investigator, and the name and location of the awarded through NAF communication channels, including but not limited to the NAF web page, newsletter, annual report, and social media pages.

Lay summaries will also be published in NAF communication channels and, therefore, should not contain any confidential information. The other sections of the grant application are considered confidential and will only be released to members of NAF's Medical Research Advisory Board members, the review committee, NAF staff and NAF Board of Directors.

## **Definitions**

Indirect Costs: Indirect costs (sometimes known as Facilities and Administrative costs) are defined as costs incurred when conducting or supporting research and service, but which cannot be readily identified as benefiting research projects. Examples of indirect costs include, but are not limited to:

- Operation and maintenance: utilities, janitorial services, routine maintenance, and repairs, etc.
- Depreciation or use allowance: for buildings and equipment
- General administration and general expense: accounting, payroll, administrative offices, etc.
- Sponsored project administration: personnel and other costs of offices whose responsibility is the administration of sponsored projects
- Departmental administration expenses: administrative costs at the college and departmental levels