



## Early Career Investigator Award

### 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 Early Career Investigator Award.

### Grant Description

The Early Career Investigator Award was created to encourage early career clinical and scientific investigators to pursue a career in the field of ataxia research. It is our hope that ataxia research will be invigorated by the work of talented individuals supported by this award. Applications for any form of ataxia, including the SCAs, are accepted for this award.

**Funding Period:** 1 year from March 1, 2024 to February 28, 2025; No-cost extensions (NCE) will be considered for extenuating circumstances and are subject to approval by NAF.

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

**Letter of Intent Deadline:** September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023 by 11:59 PM ET

**Application Deadline:** November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023 by 11:59 PM ET

### Eligibility & Guidelines

1. Candidates must have attained an MD or PhD degree, and have an appointment as a junior faculty member, senior post-doc, or clinical fellow. Individuals at the Associate Professor level are not eligible. Clinicians must have finished their residency no more than five (5) years prior to applying.
2. Funds can be used as salary support or for direct research expenses.
3. The sponsoring institution must agree in writing to the following provision: the investigator (MD or PhD) must be free to allocate approximately half time (50%) for ataxia related research.
4. Non-U.S. citizens are eligible to apply for the Early Career Investigator award. Early Career Investigator grant applications are accepted from U.S. and international institutions.
5. The National Ataxia Foundation will retain the right to unilaterally cancel any awards for non-compliance or non-performance.
6. Awards are not transferable to other researchers, but subject to NAF approval, may be transferred to a new institution should the awardee change institutions.
7. All awardees must agree to ResearchFish Statement

## Grant Application Instructions

### Create a proposalCENTRAL account

To utilize the proposalCENTRAL online portal to submit letters of intent and applications, a user account needs to be created. Use this weblink <https://proposalcentral.com> to create an account. Creating an account can be done any time prior to submitting a Letter of Intent.

### Letter of Intent (LOI)

Using the proposalCENTRAL online portal, submit your research proposal's full title and specific aims on or before **September 15, 2023 by 11:59 PM ET**. You will receive an email informing you whether your LOI has been accepted on **October 2, 2023**. You will be able to access the proposalCENTRAL portal to prepare and submit your application if your LOI is approved.

The primary purpose of the LOI is to determine if applications are in line with the outlined aims of the grant and alignment with NAF's mission, to accelerate the development of treatments and a cure while working to improve the lives of those living with ataxia. Applicants may be informed if their proposal is better suited for submission to a different NAF grant award.

#### Guidelines for LOI Specific Aims:

Your Letter of Intent (LOI) should identify and address a statement of need, impact, and specific aims. NAF is looking to easily understand what you want to achieve, why your work matters, and how you will accomplish your goals.

Your LOI submission on the proposalCENTRAL portal will need to include:

- **Specific Ataxia Type(s)**
- **Statement of Need:** Identify the gap this proposal addresses (*4 sentences or less*).
- **Impact:** Describe the potential impact that your proposal may have on understanding ataxia and/or supporting/treating individuals with ataxia (*4 sentences or less*).
- **Specific Aims:** Prepare a specific aims page for your research to upload to proposalCENTRAL (*maximum of 1 page*).

Additional guidance for developing specific aims can be found here: [NIH Specific Aims Guidelines](#).

### Grant Application

Using the proposalCENTRAL online portal, please submit the full Early Career Investigator grant application on or before **November 14, 2023 by 11:59 PM ET**. Dates of the proposed project should be March 1, 2024 to February 28, 2025.

Complete applications will include the following attachments:

- Lay Summary
- Scientific Abstract
- Budget Details
- Background and Significance (1 page maximum)
- Biosketch
- Literature Cited
- Preliminary Studies (1 page maximum)
- Research Plan (3 page maximum)
- Signed Signature Pages
- Summary of Specific Aims (1 page maximum)
- Institutional banking instructions for domestic or international partners
- A letter from the mentor should outline a program of studies for the applicant and delineate the candidate's future plans. This letter of support should include details regarding resources available to the candidate and indicate the mentor's involvement and commitment to the applicant's research.

### 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 reviewed and evaluated by a review committee, appointed by NAF's Research Director and Chief Scientific Officer. The review committee will score and prioritize all grants received by the deadline and make funding recommendations. The Board of Directors will consider the recommendations and make the final approval and funding determinations.

Funding of awards is based on availability of funds, the priority score assigned to each application, innovation, and the relevance to the ataxias. 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 not to continue work in ataxia research, the award will be terminated. In the event that NAF terminated an award, the award amount will be pro-rated for the number of months it was in effect, and the pro-rated unused 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.

### **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 a credit 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**

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**

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 particular research projects. Examples of indirect costs include, but are not limited to:

- Plant 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