



Pre-Doctoral Fellowship to Promote Diversity in Ataxia Research

The National Ataxia Foundation (NAF) is a patient-facing nonprofit organization established in 1957 to accelerate the development of treatments for ataxia, 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 ataxias, NAF provides limited, short-term financial support of ataxia research through its annual Research Grant Program.

Description:

This two-year fellowship is a competitive, non-renewable, merit-based award intended to enhance the diversity of the ataxia research workforce. Fellowships are awarded annually to provide partial support for research training of pre-doctoral students from racial and ethnic groups underrepresented in the ataxia research community, persons with disabilities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Proposals across the spectrum of basic, translational, and clinical research are welcome, but must have a significant focus on improving our understanding of hereditary and/or other forms of ataxia.

Funding Period and Amount:

This award provides up to two years of support, beginning March 1, 2025, to February 28, 2027, totaling \$50,000 (\$25,000 per year). Funding can be used to support direct research costs associated with the funded proposal, including to support the fellow's annual stipend. Indirect costs and cost sharing are prohibited from being applied to NAF grants. A progress report is required 11 months after the start of the grant funding term. The second year of funding is contingent on demonstration of progress by the awardee. NAF retains the right to unilaterally cancel any awards for non-compliance or non-performance.

Important Dates: All documents due by 11:59 pm Eastern time zone on the dates listed.

Grant Submissions	Open Date	Deadline	Decision Notification
Letter of Intent	June 28, 2024	September. 6, 2024	October 11, 2024
Grant Application	October 11, 2024	December 2, 2024	February 2025

Eligible Applicants:

At the time of application, the applicant must:

1. Have a baccalaureate degree or equivalent and be currently enrolled in a PhD or equivalent research degree program (e.g., PharmD, PsyD, ScD), a formally combined MD/PhD program, or other combined professional/clinical and research doctoral (e.g., DDS/PhD) in the U.S.
2. Have successfully completed their qualifying exams, or equivalent*, in their respective programs by the final grant due date.

3. Be a U.S. citizen, non-citizen U.S. national, U.S. permanent residents, individual granted deferred action status under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program, or individual granted Temporary Protected Status.
4. Identify as one or more of the following:
 - i. An individual from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups in the U.S., including but not limited to Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders. Individuals from racial or ethnic groups not listed here that can be demonstrated convincingly to be underrepresented by the grantee institution are also encouraged to apply.
 - ii. An individual who identifies as LGBTQIA+.
 - iii. Individuals with a disability, who are defined as those with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, as described in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.
5. Have identified a research project and sponsor, show evidence of high academic performance in the sciences, and a commitment to a career as an independent research scientist, or as an independent physician-scientist or other clinician-scientist (dual-degree training) with a specialized interest in ataxias. The primary sponsor should be an active investigator and be committed both to the candidate's research training and to direct supervision of his/her/their research.
6. Individuals are ineligible if they were awarded a NAF grant within the past two fiscal years.
7. Applicants are only eligible to submit one application per year. Applicants should select the grant program that best suits their current position and proposal.

Application Instructions

1. **Create proposalCENTRAL Account.** NAF uses proposalCENTRAL online grant management system to facilitate Letter of Intent and grant application submissions. Use the following weblink to create an account: <https://proposalcentral.com>
2. **Prepare and Submit Letter of Intent using proposalCENTRAL portal by 11:59 pm ET, September 6, 2024.** All applicants are required to submit a Letter of Intent using the proposalCENTRAL portal that will undergo competitive review. The purpose of the LOI is to evaluate whether the outlined research proposal (1) aligns with NAF's mission and (2) demonstrates sufficient scientific rigor and ataxia relevance to merit full application review by NAF's review committee. Depending on the number of applicants per year, the top 30-50% scoring LOIs will be invited to submit a full grant application. Applicants will be notified if their LOI has been selected for grant submission by October 11, 2024.

LOI Required Documents: See more detailed instructions on proposalCentral. All sections submitted via proposalCENTRAL

- 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: NAF recommends following the [NIH Specific Aims Guidelines](#).
- Biosketch: NAF recommends following the [NIH Biosketch Guidelines](#).

3. **If you are invited to apply following LOI review, prepare and submit all grant materials using proposalCENTRAL portal by 11:59 pm ET, December 2, 2024.** Complete instructions on grant materials are listed in proposalCENTRAL. 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. Briefly, complete applications will include the following attachments:

From Applicant:

- Personal Statement
- Biosketch
- Scientific Abstract
- Lay Summary
- Specific Aims
- Background and Significance
- Preliminary Studies
- Research Plan
- Budget Details
- References

From Mentor:

- Biosketch
- Letter of Recommendation from Mentor(s)

4. **Notification of Funding Decision:** Written notification of funded and non-funded proposals will be emailed to all applicants by the end of February 2025. *Please do not call or email NAF about the status of your grant.*

For any questions about the LOI or Grant Application Process, please contact Aimee Alcott at Aimee@ataxia.org.

NAF Grant Terms and Conditions

Review Process

All applications are evaluated by a review committee, selected by NAF's Chief Scientific Officer. The review committee scores and prioritizes all grants received by the deadline and makes funding recommendations. The NAF Board of Directors considers the recommendations and makes 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 31st 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.

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.

Reports/Deliverables

A progress report is required 11 months after the start of the funding term. All awarded applicants are also 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 an account and submit progress reports. Applicants must also 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.

NAF Communications

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. All 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.