

NAF Annual Grant Program: Letter of Intent Instructions

Overview: All applicants interested in applying to one of NAF's Annual Grant mechanisms are required to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) using the ProposalCentral portal. Detailed instructions on how to submit an account through the portal are outlined in *Section I*. 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.

LOI Deadlines: All NAF Grant Mechanisms share the same following open dates and deadlines for LOI submission. *All LOIs must be completed in full and submitted by the deadline to be considered.*

- **LOI Portal Opens: June 16, 2025 at 8:00am ET**
- **LOI Deadline: August 15, 2025 at 11:59pm ET**

LOI Components: The Letter of Intent is composed of four required sections:

1. **Statement of Need:** (*4 sentences or less, ProposalCentral prompted text box*) Clearly describe the specific gap in the ataxia research or clinical care landscape that your project addresses. Explain why this gap is important, who is affected by it (e.g., patients, clinicians, researchers), and how your proposal will help fill this unmet need.
2. **Impact Statement:** (*4 sentences or less, ProposalCentral prompted text box*) Describe the potential impact that your proposal may have on advancing our understanding of ataxia improving diagnosis or enhancing care and quality of life for individuals with ataxia. Highlight how your work could influence future research, clinical practice, or patient outcomes.
3. **Specific Aims:** (*1-page max*) Uploaded as pdf to ProposalCentral. See formatting details in *Section II*.
4. **Biosketch:** (*5-page max*) Uploaded as pdf to ProposalCentral. See formatting details in *Section III*.

LOI Policies:

Individuals can only submit one LOI for one Grant Mechanism per year as the lead investigator.

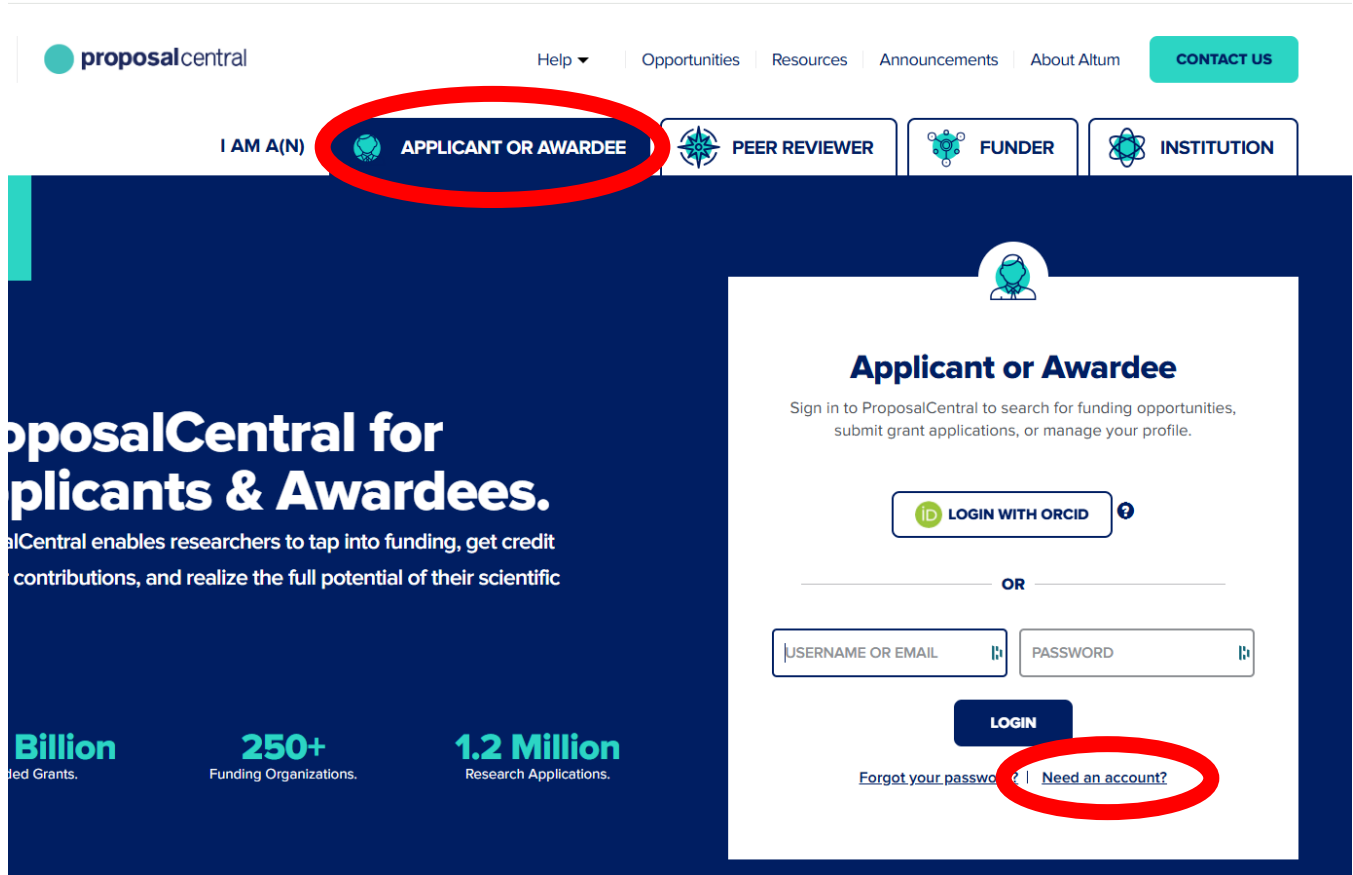
Applicants should submit the LOI to the program that best aligns with their research interests and career stage. See each grant mechanism's instructions and review NAF's website at www.ataxia.org/researcher-resources for details about specific grant mechanisms, due dates and eligibility requirements.

The lead investigator of the LOI is responsible for preparing and submitting the LOI. Fellowship applicants are encouraged to receive feedback on their LOIs from mentors, PIs, and their peers, but the content of the LOI must be written by the fellow.

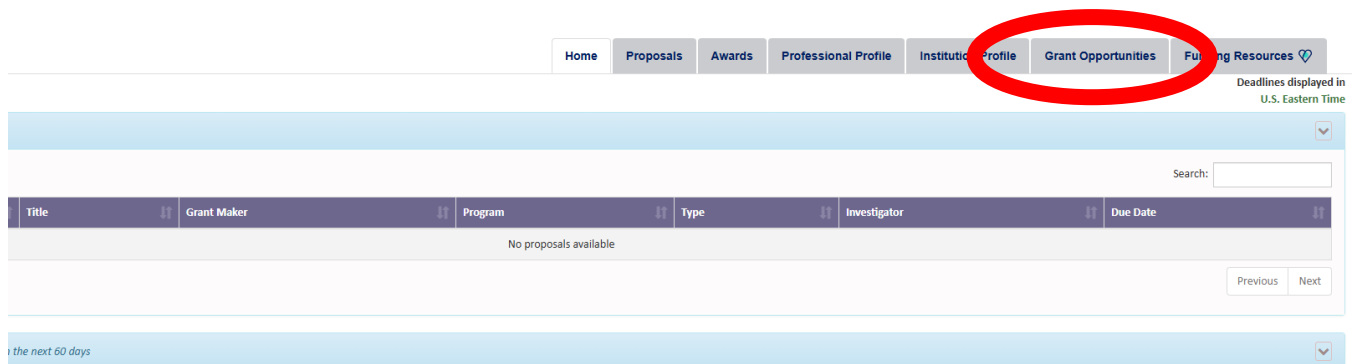
If a LOI receives a high score and the applicant is invited to submit a full grant application, the content of the full application must remain consistent with the aims and scope proposed in the LOI.

I. HOW TO START YOUR LOI USING ProposalCentral:

1) Visit www.proposalcentral.com and click along the top tabs (“I am a[n]...”) to log in as an applicant. Existing users should log in or follow the link to reset your password. New users can click on “Need an account?” near the login button to create an account.



2) Once logged in, click along the top tabs to select “Grant Opportunities,” and then search for National Ataxia Foundation to see links to each Grant Mechanism. Be sure to select the correct Grant Mechanism before beginning your LOI. Applicants will only be able to submit LOIs online when the portal officially opens on June 16, 2025.



II. SPECIFIC AIMS: FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Specific Aims section is a critical component of your research proposal, serving as a concise summary of the entire project. This section communicates the central hypothesis, overall goals, and key objectives of your study. Reviewers often base their initial impressions on the clarity and feasibility of your Specific Aims page, so it should be precise, compelling, and logically structured.

Your aims should be aligned with the National Ataxia Foundation's mission to accelerate the development of treatments and a cure for ataxia. Projects that demonstrate a clear path to clinical impact, whether through mechanistic insight, therapeutic discovery, or biomarker development, are especially encouraged.

Length:

- **1 page maximum** (strictly enforced)
 - Use **clear, concise language**, avoiding excessive jargon
 - Single spaced, 11-point font (e.g., Arial, Calibri, Helvetica, Times New Roman)
 - Should be uploaded as a pdf to ProposalCentral
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Structure:

1. Introductory Paragraph(s) (usually 1-2) – Overall Goal and Significance

- Begin with a **brief background** on the problem or unmet need in ataxia research.
- State the **long-term goal** of your research program.
- Clearly articulate the **overall objective** of the current application.
- State your **central hypothesis** and **rationale**, describing how your hypothesis was developed (preliminary data, prior work, literature).
- Emphasize the **significance** of the project—how it addresses a critical barrier or knowledge gap in ataxia.

2. Specific Aims (usually 2–3)

- List each aim clearly and concisely.
- Aims should be:
 - **Logically related** but **scientifically distinct**
 - **Not interdependent** (success of one aim should not depend entirely on the success of another)
 - **Measurable and achievable** within the project period
- Avoid overly ambitious or vague aims.

3. Impact and Innovation Statement (optional closing paragraph)

- Highlight the **innovation** in your approach or model.
 - Briefly discuss the **potential impact**: How will the successful completion of your project advance the field of ataxia research, support the mission of NAF, or lead to therapeutic development?
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Tips for a Strong Specific Aims Page:

- **Hook the reader** early with a compelling unmet need.
 - Be **hypothesis-driven** whenever possible.
 - Use **active voice** and avoid passive, overly technical writing.
 - Ensure **each aim is testable** and grounded in a logical rationale.
 - Use **subheadings, bullets, or spacing** for clarity and readability.
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III. BIOSKETCH: FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The biosketch provides reviewers with key information about the qualifications of the applicant and collaborators. NAF follows the NIH/NINDS standard biosketch format, which emphasizes contributions to science, ongoing support, and relevant expertise.

Biosketch Format Requirements

- **5 page maximum**
 - **Font/Formatting:** 11 pt font (e.g., Arial, Calibri, Helvetica, Times New Roman); 0.5-inch margins; single-spaced
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Sections:

A. Personal Statement: Describe your qualifications for the proposed project. Address:

- Your experience related to ataxia, neurology, genetics, or relevant scientific areas
- Why you are well-suited to lead or collaborate on this project
- Up to 4 publications or products that demonstrate expertise
- Optional: Any factors affecting your career path (e.g., career interruptions)
- *Tip: Tailor your personal statement to the proposed ataxia-related research.*

B. Positions, Scientific Appointments, and Honors: List professional appointments, academic positions, and relevant honors or awards. Include dates, institutions, and brief descriptions of roles when appropriate.

C. Contributions to Science: Summarize up to five key contributions to science, especially those relevant to neurodegenerative diseases or rare disease research. For each:

- Include a brief narrative describing the contribution
- List up to four peer-reviewed publications or other products (e.g., datasets, patents)
- Provide PMIDs or DOIs for all citations

D. Scholastic Performance (for Predoctoral or Postdoctoral Fellows only): Include undergraduate and graduate education, GPA (if required), and degree programs.

E. Current and Pending Research Support: List active and pending support, including:

- Project title
 - Funding source
 - Role (e.g., PI, Co-I)
 - Award period
 - Annual direct costs
 - Brief description of goals
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Submission Tips

- Submit in PDF format
 - Name your file: LastName_FirstName_Biosketch.pdf
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Additional Resources

- [NIH Biosketch Format Page](#)
- [NINDS Biosketch Guidance](#)
- Use NIH's SciENcv tool for formatting (optional but recommended):
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sciencv/>