

Introduction

The National Ataxia Foundation (NAF) is a patient-centered nonprofit organization dedicated to accelerating the development of treatments for ataxia and improving the lives of those affected by it. NAF is a global leader in driving ataxia research, fostering national and international collaboration to advance scientific discovery. As part of its commitment to identifying causes, treatments, and potential cures for ataxia, NAF offers limited, short-term financial support through its Annual Research Grant Program.

Grant Description

The NAF Early Career Investigator Award is a one-year grant designed to support outstanding early-stage scientists who have completed their postdoctoral training within the past 6 years and hold a junior faculty or clinical fellow appointment. This award aims to foster the development of independent research careers by providing seed funding for innovative, high-impact studies in the field of ataxia. Proposals are welcome across the full spectrum of basic, translational, and clinical research, but must have a clear and significant focus on advancing our understanding of the causes, pathogenesis, or treatment of hereditary, sporadic, or acquired ataxias. It is expected that the projects supported by this program will catalyze significant progress toward meaningful scientific insights and therapeutic advances in ataxia.

Funding Period and Amount

- **Funding Period:** April 1, 2026 – March 31, 2027
- **Grant Amount:** Up to \$50,000
- **Use of Funds:**
 - *Personnel Costs:* No more than 50% of the award may be allocated to personnel expenses.
 - *Indirect Costs/Cost Sharing:* Not allowed.
- **No-Cost Extensions (NCE):** Considered only under extenuating circumstances and subject to NAF approval. See [NAF Annual Grant Program Policies](#) for more details.

Important Dates: All documents due by 11:59 pm ET on the dates listed.

Grant Submissions	Open Date	Deadline	Decision Notification
Letter of Intent	June 2025	August 15, 2025	October 2025
Grant Application	October 2025	December 5, 2025	February 2026

Grant Policies

A detailed description of all NAF Annual Grant Program Policies can be found [here](#).

Eligible Applicants

Applicants must meet the following requirements:

1. Have completed a PhD, equivalent research degree program (e.g., PharmD, PsyD, ScD), formally combined MD/PhD program, or other combined professional/clinical and research doctoral degree (e.g., DDS/PhD).
2. Have completed their post-doctoral training within the past five (5) years and have an appointment as a junior faculty member or clinical fellow by Grant Application deadline. Individuals at the Associate Professor level are not eligible. Clinician scientists must have finished their residency no more than five (5) years prior to applying.
3. Hold a full-time appointment at an academic institution, non-profit organization, or for-profit company. Individuals from both U.S. and international institutions are eligible to apply. U.S. citizenship is not required.
4. Applicants who were the lead Principal Investigator (PI) on a funded NAF grant within the past two fiscal years are **ineligible**.
5. Applicants must be in good standing with any previous NAF awards, as defined by the [NAF Research Grants Policy](#).
6. Only **one application** may be submitted per applicant (as lead PI) per year; applicants should carefully select the program that best matches their career stage and research proposal.

Early Career Investigator Award Funding Priorities

The National Ataxia Foundation (NAF) is committed to advancing the careers of early-stage investigators dedicated to improving outcomes for individuals affected by ataxia. This award supports promising researchers as they build independent research programs, generate pilot data, and pursue innovative approaches that advance the ataxia field. During this funding cycle, applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. **Scientific Merit and Innovation:** NAF seeks to support high-quality, novel research that contributes significantly to our understanding of ataxia, regardless of disease subtype. Priority will be given to projects focused on:
 - a. Fundamental disease mechanisms.
 - b. Development and validation of disease models
 - c. Identification of emerging therapeutic targets or strategies
 - d. Early-stage data collection that can support future external grant applications
2. **Commitment to Ataxia Research:** Applicants should demonstrate a clear and ongoing dedication to ataxia research through previous work, collaborations, or research goals. Proposals should reflect a long-term vision of contributing meaningfully to the understanding and treatment of ataxia.
3. **Potential for Career Development and Independence:** Projects should clearly describe how the award will support the investigator's path to research independence. Strong mentorship, institutional support, access to critical resources, and opportunities for skill-building (e.g., grant writing, leadership, interdisciplinary collaboration) are strongly encouraged.

This award is designed to act as a catalyst for early-career investigators, helping them build the foundation necessary to secure long-term funding and become future leaders in ataxia research.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

STEP 1: Create a ProposalCentral Account. NAF uses ProposalCentral for all grant submissions. New users must create an account at [ProposalCentral](#).

STEP 2: Submit Letter of Intent (LOI). Submit via ProposalCentral by **August 15, 2025 at 11:59 PM ET**. All LOIs will undergo competitive review based on alignment with NAF's mission, scientific merit and relevance to ataxia. Only the top 30–50% of LOIs will be invited to submit a full application. Notification of LOI outcomes will be sent by mid-October 2025.

LOI Components: More detailed directions can be found in the [Letter of Intent Instructions](#).

- 1. Statement of Need:** *(4 sentences or less)* Clearly describe the specific gap in the ataxia research or clinical care landscape that your project addresses.
- 2. Impact Statement:** *(4 sentences or less)* 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.
- 3. Specific Aims:** *(1-page max)*
- 4. Biosketch:** *(5-page max)*

STEP 3: If invited, applicants must submit a complete application via ProposalCentral by December 5, 2025 at 11:59 PM ET. Full details and formatting requirements are outlined in *Grant Application Instructions*.

Full Grant Application Requirements:

- 1. Scientific Abstract** *(300-word limit)*
- 2. Lay Summary** *(200-word limit)*
- 3. Specific Aims** *(1-page max)*
- 4. Biosketch** *(5-page max)*
- 5. Research Plan** *(6-page max, including the following sub-sections):*
 - a. Background and Significance
 - b. Preliminary Studies
 - c. Research Strategy
- 6. Budget Details and Budget Justification**
- 7. References**

STEP 4: Funding Decisions. Applicants will be notified of funding decisions by February 2026. Please refrain from contacting NAF regarding the status of your application.

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