

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.

Description

The National Ataxia Foundation (NAF) is committed to supporting the next generation of researchers working to improve the lives of individuals affected by ataxia. The NAF Graduate Research Fellowship is a one-year, non-renewable award that provides funding to outstanding graduate students conducting research that contributes to the understanding, diagnosis, or treatment of hereditary, sporadic, or acquired ataxias. Proposals across the spectrum of basic, translational, and clinical research are accepted. The goal of this fellowship is to foster early engagement in the ataxia research field and support the development of foundational skills for future scientific careers.

Funding Period and Amount:

- **Funding Period:** April 1, 2026 – March 31, 2027
- **Grant Amount:** Up to \$25,000
- **Use of Funds:** Funds may be used for direct research expenses only.
 - *Indirect Costs/Cost Sharing:* Not allowed.
 - *Personnel Costs:* All or part of funds can be used to support the fellows salary.
- **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 Eastern time zone on the dates listed.

Grant Submissions	Open Date	Deadline	Decision Notification
Letter of Intent	June 16, 2025	August 15, 2025	October 2025
Grant Application	Upon LOI approval	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 a baccalaureate degree or equivalent
2. 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) at a not-for-profit U.S. or foreign institution of higher education at the time of application.
3. Have successfully completed their qualifying exams, or equivalent, in their respective programs by the final grant due date and have a chosen thesis advisor.
4. Non-U.S. citizens are eligible to apply for a NAF grant award.
5. Applicants who previously were awarded a NAF Pre-doctoral Fellowship award or are a recipient of another fellowship / studentship / scholarship during the grant award period are **ineligible**.
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.
7. Have identified a research project, 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.
8. Applicants that identify with an underrepresented group are encouraged to consider applying for Pre-Doctoral Fellowship to Promote Diversity in Ataxia Research grant. See grant mechanism details for more information.

Graduate Research Award Funding Priorities

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. **Scientific Merit and Innovation**
NAF encourages graduate research projects that demonstrate originality and potential for meaningful contributions to the ataxia field. Priority areas include:
 - a. Investigating fundamental mechanisms of disease
 - b. Developing and validating disease models
 - c. Exploring novel therapeutic targets or approaches
 - d. Generating preliminary data that may inform future research directions
2. **Commitment to Ataxia Research**
Applicants should show a clear interest in ataxia through their academic focus, research goals, or collaborations. Proposals should reflect a desire to contribute to long-term advancements in ataxia research.
3. **Training Environment and Mentorship**
The application should highlight how the award will support the student's scientific training and career development. Strong mentorship, access to relevant research tools and technologies, and opportunities for skill development (e.g., scientific communication, data analysis, teamwork) will be considered favorably.

This award is intended to nurture promising graduate students and provide early exposure to impactful research in ataxia, helping to cultivate the future leaders of this field.

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**
8. **Letter of Recommendation from Mentor**

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.