

# Pre-Doctoral Fellowship to Promote Diversity in Ataxia Research FY2027 Application Instructions

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## 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.

## Award Overview

The Pre-Doctoral Fellowship to Promote Diversity in Ataxia Research is a competitive, merit-based, non-renewable award that provides two years of partial support for the research training of pre-doctoral students. This program is designed to enhance the diversity of the ataxia research workforce by supporting eligible students at U.S. not-for-profit institutions who identify as members of racial or ethnic groups underrepresented in biomedical research, as LGBTQIA+, and/or as individuals with disabilities. Applicants must meet the citizenship or immigration status requirements outlined below and demonstrate a commitment to a career in ataxia research. NAF welcomes proposals across the full spectrum of basic, translational, and clinical research, provided the project has a clear and significant focus on hereditary, sporadic, or acquired ataxias.

NAF believes that diversity is essential to driving innovation, equity, and excellence in ataxia research. We are committed to fostering an inclusive scientific community that reflects a broad range of perspectives and experiences.

## Funding Details

- **Award Period:** September 1, 2027 – August 31, 2029
- **Award Amount:** \$50,000 USD total (\$25,000 per year; Year 2 funding contingent upon satisfactory progress)
- **Use of Funds:** Funds may be used for direct research expenses only. Direct research expenses refer to costs that can be specifically identified in the awarded grant to achieve progress on approved research aims. NAF supports funding for the following direct research-related expenses, subject to the requirements and limitations set forth in the NAF Annual Grant Program Policies:
  - Direct salary and/or stipend costs (excluding fringe benefits) up to 100% of the award amount (\$25,000 maximum per year), consistent with effort level and the applicable NIH salary cap or pre-doctoral stipend level. Salary and/or stipend support from NAF and other funding sources may not exceed the applicable NIH limits or 100% compensated effort, as applicable.
  - Laboratory reagents and consumable supplies
  - Equipment essential to the project (not to exceed 20% of total budget)

- Animal purchase and care costs
- Costs related to publication (not to exceed \$2,500 total)
- Investigator registration and travel to scientific meetings/conferences and collaboration-related site visits (not to exceed \$2,000 total; economy travel only). Grantees must be presenting a poster or talk related to their active NAF award.
- Patient-related expenses directly tied to the study and not reimbursed by third-party payers, including travel

Please note that indirect costs and cost sharing are not allowed. Additional unallowable costs include:

- Fringe benefits
  - Permanent or fixed equipment (e.g., sterilizers, casework, fume hoods, cold rooms and glassware/washers)
  - Costs of installing and maintaining equipment
  - Economy travel costs exceeding \$2,000, non-economy travel, incidental travel expenses, or any travel unrelated to grantee's NAF-funded work
  - Tuition expenses
  - Relocation costs
  - Premiums for insurance of equipment and supplies
  - Dues to organizations such as federations or societies
  - Registration fees for scientific meetings if not presenting NAF-funded work
  - Purchase of general office supplies, books, journals, or office equipment
  - Costs related to "Contingency" funds or provision
  - Over expenditures or cost overruns
  - Duplication of funding
- **No-Cost Extensions (NCE):** Considered only under extenuating circumstances and subject to NAF approval.
  - **Progress Report:** A progress report is required midway through the 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.

### Application Cycle Timeline

| Grant Submissions        | Open Date          | Deadline          | Decision Notification |
|--------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Letter of Intent</b>  | September 14, 2026 | November 18, 2026 | January 2027          |
| <b>Grant Application</b> | Upon LOI approval  | March 1, 2027     | June 2027             |

All applications are due by 11:59 PM ET on the deadlines listed.

**Grant Policies**

Applicants are responsible for reviewing and complying with all eligibility requirements, budget restrictions, and applicable NAF Annual Grant Program Policies. NAF Annual Grant Program Policies are linked on the NAF Researcher Resources webpage.

## Pre-Doctoral Fellowship to Promote Diversity in Ataxia Research Eligibility

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 another combined professional/clinical and research doctoral degree program (e.g., DDS/PhD) at a not-for-profit **U.S. institution** of higher education.
2. Have successfully completed their qualifying exams, or equivalent in their respective programs.
3. Be a U.S. citizen, non-citizen U.S. national, U.S. permanent resident, 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 an underrepresented racial and ethnic group 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. An individual with a disability, defined as someone 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 with a clear and significant focus on ataxia, demonstrate evidence of high academic performance in the sciences, and demonstrate a commitment to a career as an independent research scientist, independent physician-scientist, or other clinician-scientist (dual-degree training) with a specialized interest in ataxias. The applicant's sponsor/mentor must be an active investigator with relevant expertise in ataxia who is committed to both the candidate's research training and direct supervision of their research.
6. Applicants who have previously received either an NAF Graduate Research Fellowship or Pre-doctoral Fellowship to Promote Diversity in Ataxia Research are ineligible.
7. Applicants may not apply for or receive duplicate funding for their research. Applicants who have other current or pending funding must ensure that NAF Grant funds are not requested for or allocated to project aims, activities, expenses, salary support, or stipend support already funded for the same purpose by another source. All current and pending support must be disclosed to NAF as part of the application process, and applicants must notify NAF of any additional funding received during the review, pre-award, or active Grant period that may overlap with the proposed NAF-funded project.
8. Applicants may submit only one Letter of Intent to NAF per funding cycle. Applicants should select the strongest project and apply under the funding mechanism that best aligns with their career stage, eligibility, and proposed research.

## Pre-Doctoral Fellowship to Promote Diversity in Ataxia Research 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.

**STEP 2: Submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) by November 18, 2026 at 11:59 PM ET.** Detailed LOI content and formatting guidelines are linked on the NAF Researcher Resources webpage and the ProposalCentral application portal.

### LOI Components Include:

1. **Statement of Need** (4 sentences)
2. **Impact Statement** (4 sentences)
3. **Specific Aims** (1-page max)
4. **Biosketch** (5-page max)

All LOIs will undergo competitive review based on significance, scientific merit, and alignment with NAF's mission. Notification of LOI outcomes will be sent in January 2027.

**STEP 3: If invited, submit a full proposal by March 1, 2027 at 11:59 PM ET.** Detailed proposal content and formatting guidelines are linked on the NAF Researcher Resources webpage and the ProposalCentral application portal.

### Proposal Components Include:

1. **Scientific Abstract** (250-word limit)
2. **Lay Summary** (150-word limit)
3. **Research Keywords**
4. **ORCID iD Linking**
5. **Specific Aims** (1-page max)
6. **Biosketch** (5-page max)
7. **Research Plan** (6-page max)
8. **Budget Details and Budget Justification**
9. **Literature Cited**
10. **Signed Approval from Institutional Officers**
11. **Personal Statement** (300 words)
12. **Mentor Letter of Support** (1-page max)

**STEP 4: Funding Decisions.** All proposals will undergo competitive peer review based on scientific merit, feasibility, potential impact, and alignment with NAF's mission and applicable funding priorities. Funding recommendations from NAF's Research Review Subcommittee will be presented to NAF's Board of Directors for final approval. Notification of application outcomes will be sent in June 2027. Please refrain from contacting NAF regarding the status of your application.

### Additional Questions?

All technical questions related to accessing and navigating ProposalCentral should be directed to the help desk at [pcsupport@altum.com](mailto:pcsupport@altum.com) or by calling 1-800-875-2562.

Applicants with programmatic questions should review all published materials before contacting NAF by emailing Aimee Alcott at [aimee@ataxia.org](mailto:aimee@ataxia.org).

**LOI stage inquiries should be submitted by November 1, 2026.**

**Full application inquiries should be submitted by February 12, 2027.**

NAF cannot guarantee responses to questions received after the applicable inquiry deadline.