

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 NAF Early Career Investigator Award is a one-year grant designed to support outstanding early-stage scientists. 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 Details

- **Award Period:** September 1, 2027 – August 31, 2028
- **Award Amount:** \$50,000 USD
- **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 50% of the award amount (\$25,000 maximum), consistent with effort level and the applicable NIH salary cap or 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.

Application Cycle Timeline

Grant Submissions	Open Date	Deadline	Decision Notification
Letter of Intent	September 14, 2026	November 18, 2026	January 2027
Grant Application	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 and the ProposalCentral application portal.

Early Career Investigator Award Eligibility

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 six (6) years and/or have an appointment as a junior faculty member. Individuals at the Associate Professor level are not eligible. Clinician scientists must have finished their residency no more than six (6) 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. Prior NAF Awardees: Individuals are ineligible to apply if they received any NAF grant within the past two fiscal years, have an active NAF grant under a no-cost extension at the time of application, or are delinquent with NAF grant reporting requirements. Previous NAF Early Career Investigator awardees are also ineligible to apply.
5. 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.
6. 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.

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.

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**

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 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.

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.