



NAF Annual Grant Program: FY2027 Proposal Instructions

This document outlines content and formatting instructions for the proposal stage of NAF's annual grant application cycle. As a reminder, all Letters of Intent (LOIs) are subject to competitive peer review, and notifications will be sent in January 2027. If your LOI is approved, you will be able to access the proposal template in ProposalCentral to begin your full grant application.

Before You Begin

Carefully review all mechanism instructions, applicable guidelines, and program policies as part of preparing your proposal.

The listed applicant is responsible for writing and submitting the full proposal. Applicants are encouraged to seek feedback from mentors, PIs, and peers; however, the application must be prepared by the applicant and tailored specifically to the proposed NAF project.

All submitted content must represent the applicant's own scientific ideas, analysis, and intellectual contributions. Applicants remain fully responsible for the accuracy and originality of all submitted materials. References and source materials must be appropriately cited.

Before You Submit

Verify all sections of your proposal, including required institutional contacts and associated electronic signatures, are accurate and complete before submitting the application by the posted deadline. Ensure that all components conform to the guidelines described below.

Proposal Deadline

All NAF grant mechanisms share the same proposal submission timeline. All proposals must be completed in full and submitted by the deadline to be considered. NAF cannot accept incomplete or late applications.

- **Proposal Portal Opens:** Upon LOI approval in January 2027
- **Applicant Questions Due:** February 12, 2027
- **Proposal Deadline:** March 1, 2027 at 11:59pm ET
- **Decision Notification:** Applicants can expect to receive proposal decisions in June 2027

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.

Proposal inquiries should be submitted by February 12, 2027. NAF cannot guarantee responses to questions received after this date before the March 1 submission deadline.

Full Proposal: Content and Formatting Guidelines

Please note:

All technical questions (creating an account, updating your profile, or starting and submitting applications in ProposalCentral) **must be directed to the ProposalCentral support team at pcsupport@altum.com or by calling 1-800-875-2562.**

NAF does not have access to applicant or institutional officer ProposalCentral account views and cannot troubleshoot account-specific technical issues.

In addition to general project, applicant, and institutional information, the full proposal template in ProposalCentral includes the following sections:

- 1. ORCID Linking:** Applicants are required to link their ORCID iD to their ProposalCentral professional profile. If you have not previously linked your ORCID iD, you will be prompted to connect and authorize sharing your ORCID profile from the Applicant page of the proposal. *ORCID provides researchers with a unique, persistent digital identifier that distinguishes them from other researchers and connects them with their scholarly contributions and affiliations. Applicants who do not already have an ORCID iD can register for one at no cost at orcid.org.*
- 2. Lay Summary (150 words max, text box entry):** In a single paragraph, provide a brief lay summary of your project written in plain, non-scientific language that can be easily understood by a general audience.

Recommended Formatting Notes:

- The lay summary should:
 - Explain the purpose of the proposed research.
 - Describe why this project is important for people affected by ataxia.
 - Highlight the potential impact your work may have on research, care, or treatment.
- Write it as if you are describing your project to a non-scientist friend or teenage family member, avoiding technical jargon and acronyms. If acronyms are used, spell them out at first mention.
- Please note: if your grant is selected for funding, this summary will be shared with NAF community members, including patients and their families. Do not include any proprietary or confidential information.

- 3. Scientific Abstract (250 words max, text box entry):** In a single paragraph, provide a scientific abstract of the project in technical terms that would be appropriate for experts in the field.

Recommended Formatting Notes:

- The abstract should:
 - Briefly describe the problem being addressed and its relevance to ataxia.
 - State the main goal(s) or hypothesis of the project.
 - Summarize the key methods, experimental design, or approach you will use.
 - Highlight the anticipated results and how they will be evaluated.
 - Explain potential impacts of the work
- Avoid unexplained jargon or abbreviations. If acronyms are used, spell them out at first mention.

- 4. Research Keywords:**

- i. **Disease Focus Area:** Identify your project's disease focus area(s) from the provided list. Select at least one Keyword from this list that best matches your proposal. You may select up to two.
- ii. **Research Area:** Identify your project's research area(s) from the provided list. Select at least one Keyword from this list that best matches your proposal. You may select up to two.

Keywords will be used to sort proposals and match your application with reviewers whose expertise aligns with your project.

5. Budget Period Detail: Input the specific costs for each expense category using the table included as part of the application template.

i. General Guidance:

- Costs must be reasonable, necessary, and directly related to the proposed project.
- Costs may not exceed the full award amount, and all costs must conform to mechanism-specific and general grants program policies.
- Institutional facilities and administrative costs (indirects) are not allowed.

ii. Expense Categories:

- **Personnel costs:** Please refer to grant mechanism-specific instructions and NAF Annual Grant Program Policies for stipend/salary guidelines and restrictions.
- **Non-personnel costs:**
 - Consultant Costs
 - Equipment
 - Supplies
 - Travel to Scientific Meetings
 - Other Expenses
- **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:**
 - Direct salary and/or stipend costs (excluding fringe benefits), subject to mechanism-specific restrictions and applicable NIH salary cap or stipend level, and consistent with effort level.
 - 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). Researchers 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

- **Unallowable Costs:** 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
 - Non-economy travel and incidental expenses
 - Travel costs exceeding \$2,000, 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
 - General office supplies, books, journals, or office equipment
 - Costs related to "Contingency" funds or provision
 - Over expenditures or cost overruns
 - Duplication of funding

6. Budget Justification (3000 characters max): The Budget Justification should explain and support the requested costs in your application. This section must be clear enough for reviewers to understand why each cost is necessary for the proposed research. Avoid vague justifications such as "to support research activities." Be specific. Reviewers should be able to match each line item in your budget table to a clear explanation in the justification.

7. Electronic Signatures: You and your required institutional contacts, including the appropriate Signing Official and Financial Officer, must electronically sign off on the application before it can be submitted. Mentor signoff is also required for Graduate Research Fellowship and Pre-doctoral Fellowship to Promote Diversity in Ataxia Research applications. Applicants are responsible for verifying that all appropriate contacts have been listed and are able to access the application to complete their signoffs.

**Please ensure all signatures are completed before the posted application deadline, as you will not be able to submit the application without them.*

Applicants must also upload the following PDF attachments as part of the application:

8. Specific Aims (1-page max): The Specific Aims submitted as part of your full proposal should have few to no changes relative to the version that was submitted at the LOI stage. Minor edits can be made, but the overall content and goals should not significantly change. Ensure the formatting matches the Specific Aims Guidelines described in the [Letter of Intent Instructions](#).

9. **Biosketch** (5-page max): Ensure the content and formatting match the Biosketch Guidelines described in the [Letter of Intent Instructions](#).
10. **Research Plan** (6-page max): Ensure the content and formatting match the detailed guidelines provided in the next section of this document.
11. **Literature Cited**: References must be cited appropriately and consistently across all application materials. NAF accepts both Numbered (Vancouver) style or Author–Year (Harvard) style for in-line citations. The Literature Cited page(s) do not count toward the Research Plan page limit and are uploaded as a separate document. Examples of Number (Vancouver) Style are shown below:
- ❖ **Numbered (Vancouver) Style**: Citations are numbered in the order they appear in the text. Use either superscript or brackets for in-text references and format consistently throughout the application.
 - **In-text examples**:
 - **Superscript**: ATXN3 aggregation has been observed in SCA3 models.^{1,2}
 - **Bracketed**: ATXN3 aggregation has been observed in SCA3 models [1,2].
 - **Reference list format**:
 - Lastname AB, Lastname CD. Title of article. *Journal Name*. Year;Volume(Issue):Pages.
 - Lastname EF, Lastname GH. Title of article. *Journal Name*. Year;Volume(Issue):Pages.
12. **Mentor's Letter of Support** (1-page max): Only required for National Ataxia Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship and Pre-doctoral Fellowship to Promote Diversity in Ataxia Research grant mechanisms.
**Please request this letter well before the posted application deadline, as this letter must be uploaded along with the rest of the attachments for you to submit the application.*
13. **Personal Statement**: Only required for Pre-doctoral Fellowship to Promote Diversity in Ataxia Research applications. Please prepare a brief essay (max 300 words) describing your unique perspective as part of the ataxia research community and goals for your career trajectory. The Personal Statement is submitted as a text-box response in the application template; scientific notations, special characters, special fonts, and other rich-text formatting (e.g., bold, italics, underline) cannot be saved or displayed.

Research Plan: Detailed Content and Formatting Guidelines

The Research Plan is the heart of your proposal and should provide a clear, credible, and testable plan for achieving the proposed Specific Aims. It should establish the scientific rationale for the proposed work, describe how the research will be conducted, address rigor and feasibility, anticipate potential challenges, and establish meaningful milestones within a realistic timeline.

The proposed research must clearly align with the National Ataxia Foundation's mission to accelerate the development of treatments and a cure for ataxia. Projects that demonstrate a clear path toward meaningful impact in ataxia research, whether through mechanistic insight, therapeutic discovery, biomarker development, improved diagnosis or care, or other advances relevant to ataxia, are especially encouraged.

Formatting Guidelines

The length and level of detail of the Research Plan should be appropriate to the scope and complexity of the proposed research, the applicant's career stage, and the applicable funding mechanism.

- Recommended length: 3–6 pages, including figures and tables. A 6-page maximum is strictly enforced; applicants are not expected to use the full 6 pages if a shorter Research Plan is appropriate for the proposed project.
- Use clear, concise language and avoid excessive jargon.
- Use single spacing and 11-point font (e.g., Arial, Calibri, Helvetica).
- Use clear, bolded headings to organize the Research Plan.
- Figures, tables, and timelines may be included where they aid understanding.
- A summary figure outlining the overall research strategy is encouraged but not required.
- Upload the Research Plan as a PDF in ProposalCentral.
- Literature Cited pages are not included in the 6-page limit and will be uploaded separately.

Content Guidelines

The Research Plan should address **Background, Significance, and Approach**, as described below. Background and Significance may be presented as separate sections or combined into a single narrative. Together, Background and Significance should generally comprise no more than 1–2 pages. The majority of the Research Plan should be devoted to the Approach.

1. Background

Provide the scientific context and foundation for the proposed research. Address the following, as applicable:

a. Context: Provide a concise overview of the current state of knowledge relevant to the proposed research.

b. Key Prior Work: Highlight pivotal studies, including your own work where applicable, that establish the foundation for the project.

c. Knowledge Gap: Identify what remains unknown and explain how the proposed research will address that gap.

d. Preliminary Data (if applicable): Summarize relevant pilot findings, proof-of-concept work, or other preliminary data that support the rationale or feasibility of the proposed research. Figures may be included where helpful.

2. Significance

Explain why the proposed research matters and how it could advance ataxia research. Address the following:

a. Importance of the Problem: Describe the scientific or clinical problem addressed by the project and why it is important to the ataxia field.

b. Potential Patient Impact: Describe how the proposed research could ultimately benefit people affected by ataxia, such as by advancing trial readiness, enabling new therapeutic approaches, or improving diagnosis, treatment, or care.

c. Advancing the Field: Explain how the project could address important gaps in knowledge, methods, treatments, or research infrastructure.

d. Alignment with NAF's Mission: Explain how the proposed research supports NAF's mission to accelerate the development of treatments and a cure for ataxia.

3. Approach

Use the Approach section of your Research Plan to explain how your Specific Aims will be accomplished, providing sufficient detail for reviewers to assess the rigor, feasibility, and appropriateness of the proposed research.

The proposed work should be appropriately scoped and realistically achievable within the funding amount and award period of the applicable grant mechanism. Reviewers will consider the alignment among the Specific Aims, proposed methods, budget, timeline, milestones, and anticipated outcomes when assessing feasibility.

Applicants are encouraged to organize the Approach by Specific Aim (e.g., *Aim 1*, *Aim 2*, *Aim 3*). Additional subheadings may be used within each Aim (e.g., Rationale, Methods, Expected Outcomes) where they improve clarity but are not required. Figures, tables, and timelines are encouraged where they aid understanding.

For each Specific Aim, address the following, as applicable:

1. Rationale and Hypothesis or Research Question: Briefly explain the rationale for the Aim and state the hypothesis, research question, or objective being addressed.

2. Experimental Design and Methods: Describe the study design, models, methods, assays, analyses, and other procedures to be used. Explain why the proposed methods are appropriate and address relevant considerations related to scientific rigor.

3. Expected Outcomes: Describe the anticipated results or outputs and how they will be measured, analyzed, and interpreted.

4. Potential Problems and Alternative Strategies: Identify foreseeable challenges, limitations, or risks and describe alternative approaches or contingency plans where appropriate.

5. Milestones and Timeline: Identify meaningful milestones or deliverables and provide a realistic timeline for completing the proposed work within the award period.