

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 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 Details

- **Award Period:** September 1, 2027 – August 31, 2028
- **Award Amount:** \$25,000 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 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.

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.

Graduate Research Fellowship 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 other combined professional/clinical and research doctoral program.
2. Have successfully completed their qualifying exams or equivalent in their respective program.
3. Non-U.S. citizens are eligible to apply for this NAF grant award.
4. Applications for this award are accepted from U.S. and international institutions.
5. Have identified an ataxia-related research project, demonstrate strong academic performance in the sciences and commitment to a research or clinician-scientist career relevant to ataxia, and have an appropriate sponsor or mentor who is an active ataxia investigator and is committed to the applicant's research training and direct supervision.
6. Past Graduate Research Fellowship or Pre-doctoral Fellowship to Promote Diversity in Ataxia Research awardees 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.

Applicants who identify with an underrepresented group and are based at an eligible U.S. institution are encouraged to review the Pre-doctoral Fellowship to Promote Diversity in Ataxia Research rules to determine whether that mechanism may be a good fit.

Graduate Research Fellowship 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. **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 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.