

NAF Annual Grant Program: Letter of Intent Instructions

Overview: All applicants interested in applying to one of NAF's Annual Grant mechanisms are required to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) using the ProposalCentral portal. The purpose of the LOI is to evaluate whether the outlined research proposal (1) aligns with NAF's mission and (2) demonstrates sufficient scientific rigor and ataxia relevance to merit full application review by NAF's review committee. Detailed instructions on how to begin an application through the portal are outlined in *Section I*.

General Guidelines: All projects must demonstrate a clear and direct connection to hereditary, sporadic, or acquired ataxia. Applicants are expected to tailor their LOI specifically for NAF by clearly articulating the significance of the proposed work to the ataxia community and alignment with NAF's mission.

All LOIs are subject to NAF's competitive peer review process. Depending on application volume and overall competitiveness, approximately the top 30–50% of LOIs may be invited to submit a full grant application.

Before You Begin: Applicants are expected to carefully review NAF's [Researcher Resources webpage](#) and all instructions, policies, eligibility requirements, and FAQs before beginning an LOI or contacting NAF with questions. Posted materials contain detailed information regarding:

- Funding mechanisms and eligibility requirements
- Application processes and deadlines
- Funding policies and restrictions
- Frequently asked questions

LOI Deadlines: All NAF grant mechanisms share the same LOI submission timeline. All LOIs must be completed in full and submitted by the deadline to be considered.

- **LOI Portal Opens: September 14, 2026 at 8:00am ET**
- **Applicant Questions Due: November 1, 2026**
- **LOI Deadline: November 18, 2026 at 11:59pm ET**
- **Decision Notification:** Applicants can expect to receive LOI decisions in **January 2027**

Applicant Questions: Applicants who have questions after reviewing all published materials should contact **Aimee Alcott** at aimee@ataxia.org by **November 1, 2026** to ensure adequate time for a response. NAF cannot guarantee responses to questions received after this date before the November 18 submission deadline.

LOI Components:

In addition to general applicant and institutional information and selection of relevant research keywords to assist with reviewer matching, the LOI includes four required components:

1. **Statement of Need:** *(4 sentences or less, typed into text box)* Clearly describe the specific gap in the ataxia research or clinical care landscape that your project addresses. Explain why this gap is important and who is affected by it (e.g., patients, clinicians, researchers).
2. **Impact Statement:** *(4 sentences or less, typed into text box)* Describe the potential impact that your project may have on advancing our understanding of ataxia, improving diagnosis, or enhancing care and quality of life for individuals with ataxia. Highlight how your work could influence future research, clinical practice, or patient outcomes.
3. **Specific Aims:** *(1-page max)* See content and formatting details in *Section II*.
4. **Biosketch:** *(5-page max)* See content and formatting details in *Section III*.

LOI Policies:

Investigators may submit only one LOI per funding cycle as Lead Investigator. Applicants must select one project for consideration and apply through the single funding mechanism that best aligns with their career stage and research interests. Applicants should review all eligibility requirements, funding priorities, and program policies before initiating an application.

Prior NAF awardees: Investigators who received an NAF grant within the past two fiscal years (FY2025 and FY2026) or whose projects are currently under no-cost extension are **ineligible** to apply. Investigators who are not current on NAF grant reporting requirements are **ineligible** to apply.

With the exception of the Seed Money Research Grant, investigators may receive funding only once through each NAF funding category. Investigators who have previously received funding through any of the following mechanisms are **not eligible** to apply to that same mechanism again:

- Graduate Research Fellowship OR Pre-doctoral Fellowship to Promote Diversity in Ataxia Research *(PhD students may receive only one NAF pre-doctoral fellowship, regardless of eligibility for both programs)*
- Post-doctoral Fellowship
- Early Career Investigator Award
- Michael Lundquist Grant to Advance MSA-C Research
- Pioneer SCA3 Award

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

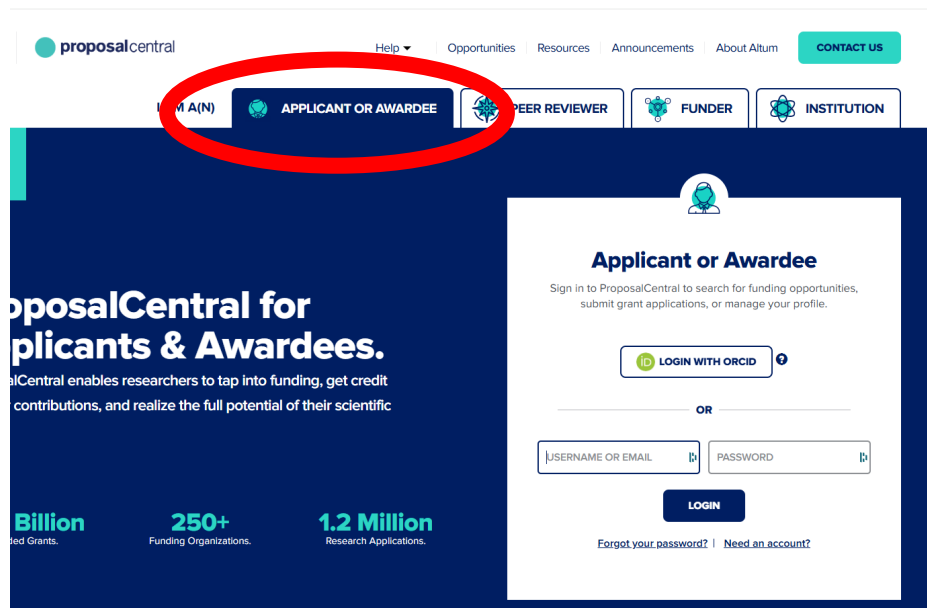
All submitted content must represent the applicant's own scientific ideas, analysis, and intellectual contributions. Applicants remain fully responsible for the accuracy and originality of all submitted materials. References and source materials must be appropriately cited.

If an LOI receives a high score and the applicant is invited to submit a full grant application, **the full application should remain substantially consistent with the aims proposed in the LOI.**

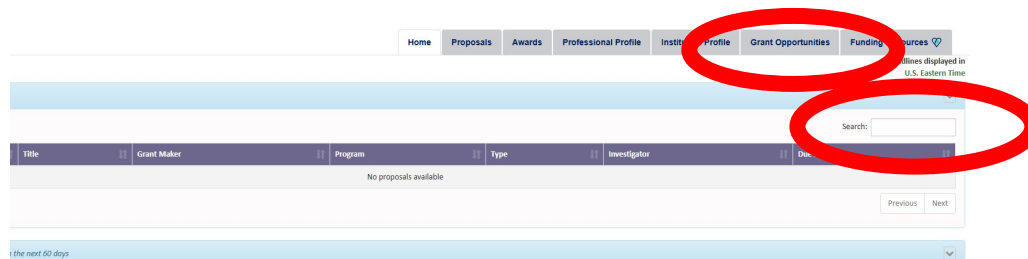
I. HOW TO START YOUR LOI USING ProposalCentral:

Please note: all technical questions (creating an account, updating your profile, starting/submitting applications in ProposalCentral) should be directed to the ProposalCentral support team at pcsupport@altum.com.

1) Visit www.proposalcentral.com and click along the top tabs (“I am a[n]...”) to log in as an applicant. Existing users should log in or follow the link to reset your password. New users can click on “Need an account?” near the login button to create an account.



2) Once logged in, click along the top tabs to select “Grant Opportunities,” and then search for National Ataxia Foundation to see links to each Grant Mechanism. Applicants will be able to begin their LOIs starting on September 14. Be sure to select the correct mechanism and confirm your eligibility before beginning your application.



II. SPECIFIC AIMS: FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Specific Aims section is a critical component of your funded research proposal, serving as a concise summary of the entire project. This section communicates the central hypothesis, overall goals, and key objectives of your study. It should be precise, compelling, and logically structured. Because LOIs are used to determine whether applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal, the Specific Aims page should focus on the scientific question, rationale, and overall approach rather than detailed experimental methods.

Your aims should be aligned with the National Ataxia Foundation's mission to accelerate the development of treatments and a cure for ataxia. Projects that demonstrate a clear path to clinical impact, whether through mechanistic insight, therapeutic discovery, or biomarker development, are especially encouraged.

Length:

- **1 page maximum** (strictly enforced), uploaded as a PDF attachment in ProposalCentral
- Single spaced, 11-point font (e.g., Arial, Calibri, Helvetica)

Structure:

1. Introductory Paragraph(s)– Overall Goal and Significance

- Begin with a **brief background** on the problem or unmet need in ataxia research.
- State the **long-term goal** of your research program.
- Clearly articulate the **overall objective** of the current application.
- State your **central hypothesis** and **rationale**, describing how your hypothesis was developed (preliminary data, prior work, literature).
- Emphasize the **significance** of the project—how it addresses a critical barrier or knowledge gap in ataxia.

2. Specific Aims (typically 2–3, although the number may vary depending on project scope)

- List each aim clearly and concisely.
- Aims should be:
 - **Logically related** but **scientifically distinct**
 - **Not interdependent** (success of one aim should not depend entirely on the success of another)
 - **Measurable, feasible, and achievable** within the award period and award amount associated with the selected funding mechanism.
- Avoid overly ambitious or vague aims.

3. Optional Impact and Innovation Statement (brief closing paragraph)

- Briefly highlight the innovation of the proposed work.
- Applicants may expand upon, but should not repeat verbatim, information provided in the LOI Impact Statement.

Tips for a Strong Specific Aims Page:

- **Hook the reader** early with a compelling unmet need.
- Be **hypothesis-driven** whenever possible.
- Use **active voice** and **clear, concise writing**; avoid passive, overly technical language.
- Ensure **each aim is testable** and grounded in a logical rationale.
- Use **subheadings, bullets, and spacing** for clarity and readability.

III. BIOSKETCH: FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The biosketch provides reviewers with key information about the qualifications of the applicant. Submit a biosketch for the lead investigator only. Your biosketch should clearly and concisely demonstrate your individual contributions to science, ongoing research support, and relevant expertise.

Biosketch Format Requirements:

- **5 page maximum** (*The 5-page limit is a maximum, not a target. Applicants should focus on providing complete and relevant information rather than filling the available space.*)
- **Formatting:** 11 pt font (e.g., Arial, Calibri, Helvetica); single-spaced

Sections:

A. Personal Statement: Describe your qualifications for the proposed project. Be sure to tailor your personal statement to this specific application. Address:

- Your experience related to ataxia, neurology, genetics, and relevant scientific areas
- Why you are well-suited to lead or collaborate on this project
- Up to 4 publications or products that demonstrate expertise
- Optional: Any factors affecting your career path (e.g., career interruptions)

B. Positions, Scientific Appointments, and Honors: List professional appointments, academic positions, and relevant honors or awards. Include dates, institutions, and brief descriptions of roles when appropriate.

C. Contributions to Science: Summarize up to five key contributions to science, especially those relevant to neurodegenerative diseases or rare disease research. For each:

- Include a brief narrative describing the contribution
- List up to four peer-reviewed publications or other products (e.g., datasets, patents)
- Provide PMIDs or DOIs for all citations

D. Scholastic Performance (for Predoctoral or Postdoctoral Fellows only): Include undergraduate and graduate education, GPA (if required), and degree programs.

E. Current and Pending Research Support: List active and pending support, including:

- Project title
- Funding source
- Role (e.g., PI, Co-I)
- Award period
- Annual direct costs
- Brief description of goals

Submission Tips

- Submit in PDF format
- Name your file: LastName_FirstName_Biosketch.pdf

Additional Resources

- [NIH Biosketch Format Page](#)
- [NINDS Biosketch Guidance](#)
- Use NIH's SciENcv tool for formatting (optional but recommended):
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sciencv/>