



Rheumatology Research Foundation

Advancing Treatment | Finding Cures

Investigator Award (IA)

The mission of the Rheumatology Research Foundation is to advance research and training to improve the health of people with rheumatic diseases.

This award is intended to support **junior investigators (with a faculty appointment)** during the period that they are developing a project that will be competitive for NIH funding. It is not intended to be a second postdoctoral fellowship. The purpose is to provide support for basic science, translational, and clinical investigators engaged in research relevant to the rheumatic diseases for the period between the completion of post-doctorate fellowship training and establishment as an independent investigator.

Successful candidates will have:

- A developed project with preliminary data that they have generated themselves
- A track record of academic productivity in the form of publications
- An outline in their application regarding how successful completion of their project will lead to NIH K grant funding (or equivalent) and/or independence over the term of the award

Award Amount: Up to \$375,000 for up to 3 years

We require a non-binding [letter of intent](#) to be submitted no later than June 3, 2019.

All applications must be submitted by 5:00 pm ET on the deadline day via the [online application link](#).

Letter of Intent Deadline
June 3, 2019
Application Deadline
July 1, 2019
Notification
December 6, 2019
Award Term Begins
July 1, 2020

If you have any questions about your eligibility or submitting your application, please contact Award & Grants staff at 404-365-1373 or Foundation@rheumatology.org.

Guidelines

All award recipients must abide by Foundation [Awards and Grants Policies](#) at all times.

Eligibility

- Applicant must meet citizenship and other eligibility requirements as outlined in the [Awards and Grants Policies](#).
- Applicant must be an ACR or ARP member at the time of submission and for the duration of the award.

ACR members must meet the following criteria:	ARP members must meet the following criteria:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have earned a DO, MD, MD/PhD, or DO/PhD degree and who have completed a Rheumatology fellowship • Individuals more than 8 years from the beginning of fellowship (or 9 years for pediatric rheumatologists) at the time of award start date may not apply • MDs and DOs who are not licensed to perform clinical care may not apply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have earned a PhD*, DSc, or equivalent doctoral degree • Must be within 6 years of terminal degree at the time of award start date

- *The Foundation does NOT currently support NON-MD/DO scientists working on basic science projects
- Applicant must have a faculty appointment (e.g. instructor, assistant professor) at the time of the application, and a firm institutional commitment to support the applicant’s academic career for the duration of the award.
- Applicant must be able to commit a minimum of 75 percent full-time professional effort to research (including at least 50 percent effort to the proposed project), academic career development, and other research related activities.
- Former or current principal investigators of research grants (at the K level or higher, including institutional K) and past awardees of this or equivalent Foundation grants are NOT eligible to apply.
- Individuals at the NIH and CDC are NOT eligible to apply.
- Applicant may not apply for the **Scientist Development Award** in the same funding cycle.

Foundation Strategic Plan

The Foundation seeks to support the best basic, translational, clinical and epidemiologic research in rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases. Applications directly addressing the current [Strategic Plan](#) are particularly encouraged.

Review Criteria

Applications are rated on the following criteria:

- Relevance of the proposal to the Foundation's mission to improve the health of people with rheumatic disease.
- The proposed research project's scientific merit, innovation and rigor.
- The applicant's submission of a well-developed analytical plan that includes power/sample size considerations (where appropriate).
- The appropriateness of the proposed project as a mechanism for developing the applicant into an independent rheumatology investigator.
- The environment in which training will be conducted, specifically the mentor, the unit, the available facilities, and the potential for inter- and extra-departmental interactions (if applicable).
- The applicant's background, training and potential to develop into a productive research scientist.
- The institutional commitment to protect applicant's time for research and continued education.

Award Terms and Funding

The institution must agree to protect at least 75 percent of the applicant's full-time professional effort for research, academic career development, and other research-related activities. **The applicant must devote at least 50 percent full-time professional effort to the proposed project.** Award funds may be used for purposes of the Investigator Award project only. Funds may not be used to compensate clinical or teaching efforts.

Awardees cannot have ever received funding as principal investigator by any of the award mechanisms outlined in the eligibility section at the time that funding for this award begins. Should the awardee receive any of the awards mentioned above during the Foundation award period, they must notify the Foundation immediately. Should the Awardee receive a K award during the term of the award, the awardee will be required to return the portion of the award funding budgeted towards salary, but may be allowed to keep the research costs budgeted as additional funding throughout the award term, unless there is scientific overlap.

Awards are funded for up to three years; however, funding in Years 2 and 3 is contingent upon evidence of a reviewed application, status on a pending submitted application or a detailed resubmission plan toward independent (e.g. NIH, VA) research funding. This information must be included in the Year 1 Progress Report.

Funds will be used to support a \$75,000 annual salary, including fringe. In addition, an amount of up to \$50,000 per year will be provided for supplies and other justified research costs— including salary support for technicians, coordinators, and statisticians, or advanced tuition. Total costs per year may not exceed \$125,000, including 8 percent indirect costs. Award payments will be distributed in two equal installments in July and January of each award year.

Annual Investigator's Meeting: The Foundation sponsors an annual Investigator's Meeting in June where all current investigators share progress updates on their funded projects. **Attendance is required for this event, and travel costs should be included as a line item in the grant budget.** Failure to attend the meeting may result in grant cancellation.

Letter of Intent

In order to help recruit the most appropriate peer reviewers and assist with study section assignments, applicants are required to submit a brief non-binding letter of intent to the Foundation by **June 3, 2019**.

The letter of intent is an online form and includes the following:

- Name of Applicant and Institution
- Listing of Mentors and Institutions
- Listing of Advisory Committee Members and Institutions
- Disease Area
- Goals of project stated in 2-3 sentences
- Indication of Human Studies or Animal Studies
- Research Category
- Primary Study Material and Method

LOI should be submitted online [at this link](#).

Application Instructions

Before starting the online application, please read the [Instructions for All Awards](#).

Applicant Information

You will be asked to confirm your eligibility and provide contact information in this section. In addition to the applicant information requested above, you will be asked to upload the following document:

Applicant Biosketch in NIH Format

Limit to 5 pages; should also include any pending support. Download NIH format Biographical Sketch template by clicking [here](#).

Mentor Information

You will be asked to identify your mentors and provide contact information in this section.

An applicant may have more than one mentor; however, at least one must be a rheumatologist or rheumatology professional and a fellow member of the ACR or ARP. Applicants should include a biosketch and support letter from each mentor. The mentors' letters should describe their commitment and specific role in the training and research plan.

This requirement does not exclude having a primary research mentor outside a rheumatology division, but does require that the trainee's academic career development has input from rheumatology faculty (e.g. rheumatologist as a co-mentor). Mentors must have sufficient independent research support to cover the costs of the proposed research project in excess of the allowable costs of the IA. The use of co-mentors to achieve the goals of the program is strongly encouraged.

Mentor(s) Biosketch in NIH Format

Limit to 5 pages per biosketch; should include any pending support. Download NIH format Biographical Sketch template by clicking [here](#).

Project Information

The information in this section is general information about the grant submission.

- **Project Title (limit 200 characters, including spaces)**
Make your title specific and detailed. It should clearly state the topic of your proposal.
- **Abstract (limit 300 words)**
Succinctly describe the hypothesis to be tested, the specific aims and global objectives of the project and the hypothesized expected results.
- **Relevance to Foundation's Mission (2-3 Sentences)**
Briefly describe how your proposed project is relevant to the Foundation's mission to improve the health of people with rheumatic disease. Specifically, please explain how your project will address at least one of the following:
 - Increase patient access to care
 - Develop future treatments and cures
 - Demonstrate or improve the value of rheumatology care
 - Expand the impact of rheumatology

In this section, be succinct and use plain language that can be understood by a lay audience. This information is made public for all awarded grants and used by the Foundation for marketing efforts.

- **Patient Impact (3-5 sentences):** In what ways will your Foundation funded award ultimately impact patients?
- **Science Category**

Please select one of the dropbox options in the online application. This will be used to assign your application to the appropriate study section.

➤ **Primary Study Material and Method**

Please select one or more of the checkbox options in the online application. This will be used to assign your application to the appropriate study section.

➤ **Research Category and Classification**

Information provided in this section will help to ensure each application is assigned to the most appropriate study section.

➤ **Keywords**

Choose three keywords that accurately describe the project. If the application focuses on a specific disease, please include it as a keyword.

Research Award Assurance

By checking this box, the applicant assures that the proposal is in compliance with institutional guidelines as provided by the sponsoring institution's clinical and research review boards. All research proposals including human subjects, laboratory animals and recombinant DNA techniques must show documented compliance with institutional guidelines. Copies of approval notices by the institutions IRB, IACUC and/or biosafety committees must be provided as appropriate once awarded.

Required Documents

Research Proposal

Limit to 12 pages including figures and tables. This does not include references, which do not have a page limit. Please see [Instructions for all awards](#) for details.

The applicant is solely responsible for writing the proposal. This section should be presented in such a way that it is clear that the applicant understands the project. **Prior to application submission, the applicant should meet with their mentor(s) and the advisory committee to review the research plan. Documentation of this meeting must be included with the application.**

**The IA advisory committee should be a multidisciplinary committee composed of 3 to 4 total members of the university faculty who will function as advisors to the awardee. More information on the composition and responsibilities of this committee is included on Page 15 of this document.*

The following questions should be addressed: What do you intend to do? Why is the work important? What has already been done? How are you going to do the work? What will potentially be learned? Describe in detail:

- A. **Specific aims (limit one page):** State the overall research hypothesis, objectives, and specific aims for the proposed project.
- B. **Background (limit three pages):** Briefly summarize the background to the proposal. Include only key references to prior work that constitutes the foundation of the proposal and preliminary background work. Preliminary data produced by the applicant is essential.
- C. **Significance (half page limit):** Include a statement on the relevance of the proposed project to the prevention,

control or cure of rheumatic diseases and/or better patient outcomes. Describe how the successful completion of the proposed project will add to a better understanding of rheumatic diseases. State the importance of the research described in this application by relating the specific aims to the broad, long-term objectives.

- D. **Experimental design and methods:** Summarize the essential features of the experimental design and methodology and interpretation of results. Include a specific plan for data and statistical analysis as well as a clearly defined power analysis where appropriate. Describe potential pitfalls and alternative approaches where relevant. Preliminary data may also be included in this section.
- E. **Innovation (half page limit):** Include a statement explaining how the application challenges and seeks to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms. Describe any novel concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation or interventions to be developed or used, and any advantage over existing methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions.
- F. **Future Direction:** Include a statement summarizing the potential impact and outcomes that this project may have on your career and the field of rheumatology. Please outline how successful completion of the aims outlined in this award will position you for future independent funding.
- G. **Selected References (no page limit)**

Benchmarks for Success

Download, complete, and submit the Benchmarks for Success Template. See example of the template below.

These benchmarks should be applied to all relevant aspects of the proposal and must be measurable. Suggested examples include: time table for research proposal, submission of abstract(s) and/or publication(s). **Timeline for other grant submission is a required benchmark.**

Budget

Download, complete, and submit the Proposed Budget Template. See example of the template below.

The budget should indicate the expected amount of salary from the award, including fringe if requested. Budgets must comply with the award terms and funding as outlined in this document.

Distribution of time

Download, complete, and submit the Distribution of Time Template. See example of the template below.

Indicate the percentage of time to be spent in any academic activity for each year of the award. List all clinical, research, teaching or administrative activities. Clinical work related to the proposed research is considered part of the research activity, but routine clinical duties are not. Clinical work related to the project must be clearly justified.

The institution must agree to protect at least 75 percent of the applicant's full-time professional effort for research, academic career development, and other research-related activities. The applicant must devote at least 50 percent full-time professional effort to the proposed project.

Research Training Plan

Limit to 2 pages. This item must be completed by the primary mentor. The primary mentor must provide a plan that details activities that will be used to aid the applicant's development into an independent investigator. The role of the mentor or mentors should be clearly outlined. Describe any coursework or other plans for obtaining specific research methodology training. If the applicant is appointed at the level of instructor—or equivalent—an assessment of the likelihood of a successful academic career.

IA Advisory Committee

Download, complete and submit the IA Advisory Committee Form.

This component of the award is designed to aid the awardee by providing critical constructive review coupled with friendly advice and counsel, giving access to established researchers and other untapped resources. The IA Advisory Committee will help the awardee stay on track with regard to project benchmarks and proposed research training plan, as well as assist in preparing timely and informative annual progress reports. **Prior to applications submission, the applicant should meet with their mentor(s) and the advisory committee to review the research plan. Documentation of this meeting must be included with the application.**

Mentor(s) Letter of Support

A letter of support is required from each mentor involved in the project. **Limit to 2 pages for primary mentor and 1 page for each additional mentor; if more than one mentor, statements should be merged to create one file for upload.**

The mentors must provide letters of support detailing the following (as applicable):

- Details of their own previous experience as mentors
- Features of their training program and the institutional environment that will be relevant to the application
- Financial and other resources available to support the applicant specific to their project
- Description of the frequency and how they will provide mentoring to the applicant
- Agreement to participate in the project and confirmation regarding availability of time to commit to the project (if specific methodological support, reagents, patients or other resources are critical to the project, they should also be addressed in the statement)
- Description of applicants qualifications and track record of productivity

Letter of Institutional Support

The purpose of this award is not to make an investigator “suitable” for employment, but to provide support for those individuals to whom the institution has made a firm commitment as an academic rheumatologist.

The division chief, department chair, or equivalent institutional official must provide written assurance of the following:

- Institution must agree to protect at least 75 percent of the applicant’s professional effort for research for the duration of the grant.
- Applicant must devote at least 50 percent of their total professional effort to the proposed research project.
- Award funds may only be used for purposes of the Investigator Award project. Funds may not be used to compensate clinical or teaching efforts.

Additional Uploads

Limit to 20 pages. Additional documents which support the grant application may be uploaded.

Note: The Foundation does not require official signature from an authorized institutional research office at the time of application. However, many institutions require an application to be reviewed prior to submission. Please check with your research office for your institution’s requirements.

Checklist of Uploads

*Use this for reference when finalizing application materials.
Please double check all documents prior to upload. You will be able to
view and print your application once it has been submitted, as well as
download the attachments for viewing.*

- Applicant Biosketch ([NIH Format](#))
- Mentor(s) Biosketch ([NIH Format](#))
- Research Proposal
- Benchmarks
- Budget & Justification
- Distribution of Time
- Research Training Plan
- IA Advisory Committee form
- Mentor(s) Letters of Support
- Letter of Institutional Support
- Additional Uploads (Optional)

Benchmarks for Success

The benchmarks (expected status of the project at various points in time) included in your original application will be used to evaluate progress. The milestones should reflect the specific aims of the proposal and be presented within the context of measurable outcomes. **Timeline for grant submission (e.g., NIH, VA) is a required benchmark.**

BENCHMARKS <i>(Should be listed in order of priority)</i>	Metrics for Success <i>(Projected end points)</i>	Expected Completion Dates

DETAILED BUDGET (DIRECT COSTS ONLY)		AWARD YEAR: 1	FROM: 07/01/2020	THROUGH: 06/30/2021	
Applicant Name:	Institutional Base Salary:	Fringe Rate:	Salary Requested:	Fringe Benefits:	Total Costs:
					\$0.00
				Requested Salary (not to exceed \$75,000):	\$0.00
RESEARCH COSTS (itemize by category)*					
Category:	Item (insert lines as necessary):				Amount:
Supplies, equipment and technical personnel:					\$
Tuition, fees, and books related to didactic courses or career development:					\$
Travel to research meetings or training:					
Statistical services including personnel and computer time:					
Travel to the Annual Investigator's Meeting (Required):					\$
JUSTIFICATION:					
				RESEARCH COSTS:	\$0.00
				TOTAL DIRECT COSTS:	
				TOTAL INDIRECT COSTS (Not to exceed 8% of year 1 Budget)	\$
				TOTAL (DC + IDC) REQUESTED FOR YEAR 1 (NOT TO EXCEED \$125,000)	#VALUE!
<p><i>Applicants should outline an itemized budget not to exceed \$125,000. Funds may be used for supplies, awardee salary and the salaries of technical personnel, but may not be used to acquire administrative or clerical support. *Requires justification. Up to \$50,000 per year may be requested for the following types of expenses: (a) research supplies, equipment and technical personnel; (b) tuition and fees and books related to didactic courses or career development; (c) travel to research meetings or training; and (d) statistical services including personnel and computer time. Attendance to the Annual Investigator's Meeting is required and travel costs should be included as a line item. Indirect costs are permitted at a rate of 8%.</i></p>					

***Excel Template will be available for download at application link.**

DETAILED BUDGET (DIRECT COSTS ONLY)		AWARD YEAR: 2	FROM: 07/01/2021	THROUGH: 06/30/2022	
Applicant Name:	Institutional Base Salary:	Fringe Rate:	Salary Requested:	Fringe Benefits:	Total Costs:
					\$0.00
				Requested Salary (not to exceed \$75,000):	\$0.00
RESEARCH COSTS (itemize by category)*					
Category:	Item (insert lines as necessary) :				Amount:
Supplies, equipment and technical personnel:					\$
Tuition, fees, and books related to didactic courses or career development:					\$
Travel to research meetings or training:					
Statistical services including personnel and computer time:					
Travel to the Annual Investigator's Meeting (Required):					\$
JUSTIFICATION:					
				RESEARCH COSTS:	\$0.00
				TOTAL DIRECT COSTS:	
				TOTAL INDIRECT COSTS (Not to exceed 8% of year 1 Budget)	\$
				TOTAL (DC + IDC) REQUESTED FOR YEAR 1 (NOT TO EXCEED \$125,000)	#VALUE!
<p><i>Applicants should outline an itemized budget not to exceed \$125,000. Funds may be used for supplies, awardee salary and the salaries of technical personnel, but may not be used to acquire administrative or clerical support. *Requires justification. Up to \$50,000 per year may be requested for the following types of expenses: (a) research supplies, equipment and technical personnel; (b) tuition and fees and books related to didactic courses or career development; (c) travel to research meetings or training; and (d) statistical services including personnel and computer time. Attendance to the Annual Investigator's Meeting is required and travel costs should be included as a line item. Indirect costs are permitted at a rate of 8%.</i></p>					

***Excel Template will be available for download at application link.**

DETAILED BUDGET (DIRECT COSTS ONLY)		AWARD YEAR: 3	FROM: 07/01/2022	THROUGH: 06/30/2023	
Applicant Name:	Institutional Base Salary:	Fringe Rate:	Salary Requested:	Fringe Benefits:	Total Costs:
					\$0.00
				Requested Salary (not to exceed \$75,000):	\$0.00
RESEARCH COSTS (itemize by category)*					
Category:	Item (insert lines as necessary):				Amount:
Supplies, equipment and technical personnel:					\$
Tuition, fees, and books related to didactic courses or career development:					\$
Travel to research meetings or training:					
Statistical services including personnel and computer time:					
Travel to the Annual Investigator's Meeting (Required):					\$
JUSTIFICATION:					
				RESEARCH COSTS:	\$0.00
				TOTAL DIRECT COSTS:	
				TOTAL INDIRECT COSTS (Not to exceed 8% of year 1 Budget)	\$
				TOTAL (DC + IDC) REQUESTED FOR YEAR 1 (NOT TO EXCEED \$125,000)	#VALUE!
<p><i>Applicants should outline an itemized budget not to exceed \$125,000. Funds may be used for supplies, awardee salary and the salaries of technical personnel, but may not be used to acquire administrative or clerical support. *Requires justification. Up to \$50,000 per year may be requested for the following types of expenses: (a) research supplies, equipment and technical personnel; (b) tuition and fees and books related to didactic courses or career development; (c) travel to research meetings or training; and (d) statistical services including personnel and computer time. Attendance to the Annual Investigator's Meeting is required and travel costs should be included as a line item. Indirect costs are permitted at a rate of 8%.</i></p>					

***Excel Template will be available for download at application link.**

Distribution of Time/Effort

The institution must agree to protect at least 75 percent of the applicant's full-time professional effort for research, academic career development, and other research-related activities. The applicant must devote at least 50 percent full-time professional effort to the proposed project.

<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>DURING AWARD (%)</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
Research		
Foundation Funded Project (Min 50%)	_____	_____
Other Research Activities	_____	_____
Clinical Duties Teaching	_____	_____
Administrative	_____	_____
Other (explain below)	_____	_____
TOTAL*	<u> 100%</u>	
	Column must total 100%	

Other Explanation:

Definitions:

- Foundation Project* Time applicant will spend on activities related to the proposed project
- Other Research* Time applicant will spend on other research projects
- Clinical* Clinical activities including clinical teaching activities, such as ward rounds and clinics
- Teaching* Teaching activities in a non-clinical setting
- Administrative* Administrative duties

Advisory Committee Requirements

Purpose

The advisory committee is designed to aid the awardee through critical constructive review coupled with friendly advice and counsel. The advisory committee Chair is envisioned to be yet another individual the awardee can turn to for advice on larger issues such as overall research direction and insight. The advisory committee should meet to review the applicant's research plan prior to submission, and meet subsequently throughout the period of the award.

Composition

The advisory committee should be a multidisciplinary committee composed of **3 to 4** total members of the university faculty who will function as advisors to the awardee. The committee must contain at least one member NOT affiliated with the division in which they belong and at least two members who are not part of the applicant's mentoring team. The advisory committee should be constructed by the awardee and their primary mentor. The committee will be chaired by a member of the committee who is NOT the awardee's primary mentor and not the division or department head. Biosketches and letters of support are required for all mentors, but not members solely of the advisory committee.

Meetings

Prior to application submission, the applicant should meet with committee to review the research plan. Documentation of this meeting must be included with the application. If the applicant is selected for funding, the committee should convene for one hour at least twice a year during the funded project period. At each meeting, the awardee will be expected to give a **formal 20 minute presentation** of their work accomplished to date and plans for the future. This will be followed by 20 minutes of questions and comments by the committee for the awardee. This 40 minute period will then be followed by a 10 minute period where the awardee is absent and the committee can discuss any concerns with the awardee's progress to date. The committee will spend the final 10 minutes of the meeting presenting the evaluation of the group and offering advice for successfully working towards the awardee's stated career goals and successful completion of the award. The awardee is encouraged to contact the committee as a whole or individually via e-mail, telephone or individual meetings throughout the award period with concerns or questions.

Annual Reports

Annual progress reports will be due each spring. It is expected that the advisory committee will play a large role in the completion of a succinct, informative and timely progress report, as well as an informative final report at the end of the award period. The advisory committee will be required to provide sign-off on all reports, indicating they have carefully reviewed the reports and provided feedback to the awardee. Please also include the mentorship evaluation form with your yearly reports. Documentation of this meeting must be included with each progress report.

Goals

The result of this mentoring process should be a project that received great support, and was kept on course. The Foundation should then receive two (three if a third year is granted) detailed and informative progress reports. The research years should have been devoted to accomplishing the original aims, goals and benchmarks stipulated in the original application (if not changed by the advisory committee). Below are some examples of products that may result from this process:

- Peer-reviewed publication (s) in which the awardee played a substantial role
- Presentations at scientific meetings based on the project
- A thesis or dissertation written in connection with the pursuit of an advanced degree
- Grant applications to other institutes, agencies, etc., that has been accepted or favorably reviewed

Advisory Committee Meeting Record *(submit with application)*

Use the form below to confirm the committee has **reviewed your entire application submission**.
Documentation/minutes from this meeting must be included with the application, and should be merged to this signature page and uploaded as one PDF file.

Date of Initial Advisory Committee meeting and review of entire application submission (must be prior to application submission):

Date: _____

Advisory Committee Sign Off

Each person should sign below to confirm they have met and reviewed the research plan prior to submission.

Applicant/Principal Investigator:

Print Name _____

Signature _____

Advisory Committee Chair (cannot be primary mentor or division/department head):

Print Name _____

Signature _____

Primary Mentor:

Print Name _____

Signature _____

Additional Advisory Committee Member (from outside division):

Print Name _____

Signature _____

Additional Advisory Committee Member (Optional):

Print Name _____

Signature _____

****It is required that at least two members above are NOT part of the applicant's mentoring team.***