



Rheumatology Research Foundation

Advancing Treatment | Finding Cures

Career Development Bridge Funding Award: R Bridge

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

The purpose of this award is to provide funding to NIH R01, VA Research Career Scientist (RCS) or Merit Award applicants whose application received a priority score OR status of "Competitive but Not Discussed" but was not funded, and who are at risk of running out of research support.

Important Update About this Deadline: To support investigators who intended to submit a K or R Bridge in December but were unable to obtain review feedback in October or November due to the government shutdown, the Foundation is offering an additional emergency application deadline: March 2, 2026.

Who is eligible for the March 15 deadline?

The March deadline is reserved exclusively for investigators who were adversely affected by the government shutdown and therefore could not receive a summary statement in time to meet the initial December 1 deadline. **Applicants must have a summary statement dated October 1, 2025, or later.**

Award Amount: Up to \$100,000

Award Duration: 1 Year

All applications must be submitted by 5:00 pm ET on the deadline day through [ProposalCentral](#).

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.

Applications are accepted as detailed below:

Application Opens
December 15, 2025
Application Deadline
March 15, 2026
Award Notification
April 1, 2026

Guidelines

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

Eligibility

- Applicants must be [ACR](#) or [ARP](#) members with an MD, DO, PhD or equivalent doctoral level degree from an accredited institution.

ACR members must meet the following criteria:	ARP members must meet the following criteria:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants must have less than one year (or a lapse) remaining on one of the following awards: NIH K08, K23, K25, K99/R00, VA CDA, institutional K, or Rheumatology Research Foundation Investigator Award. • Have earned a DO, MD, MD/PhD, or DO/PhD degree and have completed a Rheumatology fellowship. • MDs and DOs who are not licensed to perform clinical care in the U.S. may not apply. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants must have less than one year (or a lapse) remaining on one of the following awards: NIH K01, K08, K23, K25, K99/R00, VA CDA, institutional K, or Rheumatology Research Foundation Investigator Award. • Have earned a PhD*, DSc, or equivalent degree.

- Applicants must have a summary statement or review feedback dated October 1, 2025 or later to be eligible for the March 2026 deadline.
- * Non-MD/DOs submitting basic science projects must clearly demonstrate direct applicability to rheumatic diseases, relevance to the Foundation's mission and demonstrate a clear future career path in the field of rheumatology.
- Previous recipients of an NIH R01 or VA RCS/ORD are not eligible to apply.
- Applicants must have received a priority score OR status of "Competitive but not Discussed" and summary statement on their NIH R01 or VA RCS/ORD award. Applicants whose career development applications were streamlined and therefore, not discussed during peer review, are not eligible. Bridge funds are not intended to bridge the period between review and funding.
- Previous recipients of this award are not eligible to apply.
- In addition to an excellent application, applicants must be capable of becoming independent, researchers with a clear and firm institutional commitment to their continued career development, including a faculty position and other supporting resources.

Review Criteria

All applications will undergo a peer review process and final funding decisions will be made by the Foundation Scientific Advisory Council. Applications will be reviewed on the following criteria:

- Relevance of the proposal to the Foundation's mission to improve the health of people with rheumatic disease
- Demonstrated experience and productivity as a rheumatology investigator
- Priority score OR status of "Competitive but Not Discussed" and summary statement/critique from NIH/VA study section
- Strategy to address comments in the critique/summary statement
- Evidence of strong scientific and career mentoring
- Demonstration of institutional support

Applicants will be notified of their status within one month of the application deadline.

Award Terms and Funding

The award term is a maximum of two years at up to \$100,000 in direct costs per year. Funding may be used to cover a portion of the investigator's salary support (up to \$75,000), as well as for research costs, such as supplies, and/or hiring a technician, statistician, etc.

The total salary requested must be based on a full-time, 12-month faculty appointment requiring the candidate to devote a minimum of 75% of full-time professional effort to conducting research with the remaining effort being devoted to activities related to the development of a successful research career.

The Foundation does not allow indirect costs to the institution through this mechanism.

Payment will be made in two equal installments each year. The first payment will be released within 2 weeks of award notification pending receipt of contractual documents, and the second payment will be made six months thereafter.

The grant is not renewable. If an applicant receives NIH/VA or another equivalent award during the bridge funding award term, the applicant must notify the Foundation immediately. Remaining Foundation funds will need to be returned as of the new award start date.

Recipients must notify the Foundation when they resubmit their application to the NIH or VA. Resubmission is expected during the bridge funding period. In addition, recipients will provide the Foundation with annual reports on the progress of the research project(s) and resubmission.

ORCID provides a persistent digital identifier (an ORCID ID) that you own and control, and that distinguishes you from every other researcher. Applicants are required to connect their ORCID Identification Number with ProposalCentral at

the time of application. If the applicant does not have an ORCID Identification Number, one should be created and connected to the application prior to submission. If selected for funding, applicant will be required to “Trust” the Rheumatology Research Foundation as an organization to optimize tracking of project metrics. For instructions on how to link your ORCID ID with your application in ProposalCentral, visit [this link](#) and scroll to page 35.

Application Instructions

Before starting the online application, you will be required to create a Professional Profile in ProposalCentral, if you have not already. To do so, visit [this link](#) to begin creating your account.

All files must be saved as a PDF. Documents that do not have a required template should be formatted with ½ inch margin, 11-point Arial Font, and single-spacing (does not apply to figures and tables). All applications and documents must be written in English and avoid use of jargon. If terms are not universally known, spell out the term the first time it is used and note the appropriate abbreviation in parentheses. The acronym may be used thereafter.

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.

Applicant/Principal Investigator

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 documents:

Applicant’s Biosketch in [NIH Format](#)

Limit 5 pages; should include any pending support and follow current NIH guidelines.

Abstract/Project Information

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

A. Project Title (limit 200 characters including spaces)

Make your title specific and detailed. It should clearly state the topic of your proposal.

B. Abstract (limit 2,000 characters including spaces)

Succinctly describe the hypothesis to be tested, the specific aims or global objectives of the project and the expected results.

C. Relevance to Foundation’s Mission (limit 1,000 characters including spaces)

Briefly describe how your proposed project is relevant to the Foundation’s mission to improve the health of people with rheumatic disease. 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.

- D. **Patient Impact (limit 1,500 characters including spaces):** What problem is your project aiming to solve for patients?
- E. **Keywords**
Choose three keywords that accurately describe the project. If the application focuses on a specific disease, please include it as a keyword.
- F. The following questions will be used to assign your application to the appropriate reviewer. Please select one or more of the options in the online application.
- Primary Research Material
 - Science Category
 - Primary Research Method/Area
 - Research Classification
 - Primary Biomedical/Health Research Category

Budget & Justification

Applications must include an itemized budget and justification indicating how up to \$100,000 in direct costs per year will be spent. Funding may be used to cover a portion of the investigator's salary support (up to \$75,000), as well as for research costs, such as supplies, and/or hiring a technician, statistician, etc. The total salary requested must be based on a full-time, 12-month faculty appointment requiring the candidate to devote a minimum of 75% of full-time professional effort to conducting research with the remaining effort being devoted to activities related to the development of a successful research career. Indirect costs are not allowed.

Current & Pending Support

Applicant should list all current and pending research support, including but not limited to grants and contracts. Indicate any current startup funds. For each entry specify the overlap between the other awards, applications, and/or sources listed in this application.

Organization Assurances

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

Please upload the following:

- **NIH/VA Face Page**
As submitted in original application.
- **NIH/VA Summary Sheets** - *Applicants must have a summary statement or review feedback dated October 1, 2025 or later to be eligible for the March 2026 deadline.*
- **Benchmarks**
Download, complete and submit the Benchmarks of Success template. Benchmarks of success should be included for the completion of the preliminary experiments needed for a resubmission of the original proposal. **Timeline for the re-submission of an application for independent research funding is a required benchmark.**
- **Statement from Applicant**
Four pages maximum. The statement should outline the applicant's strategy for a response to the NIH/VA critique in a substantive and meaningful way that will result in re-submission during the period of bridge funding. This should include the one-page "Introduction to Application" that the applicant plans to submit with the R01 resubmission, plus up to 3 pages of supporting information detailing plans for acquiring specific preliminary data to be included in the R01 resubmission.
- **Letter of Institutional Support**
The department chair must provide evidence of adequate institutional support and protected time to allow completion of the proposed work and submission of an application for independent research funding. The institution must agree to protect at least 75% of the applicant's time and effort for research. The amount of additional salary support from the institution should be stated. The letter should explicitly state how the institution will support the applicant through the process of competing for career development support.

BENCHMARKS OF SUCCESS

Applications should include a list of benchmarks (expected status of the project at various points in time). These milestones will be used to evaluate progress and to facilitate communication between principal investigators and the Foundation Scientific Advisory Council. Benchmarks of Success should be included for the completion of preliminary data needed to submit an independent VA or NIH proposal. **Timeline for the submission of an application for independent research funding is a required benchmark.**

Benchmarks <i>(Should be listed chronologically)</i>	Metrics for Success <i>(Projected end points)</i>	Expected Completion Dates